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**The Czech Republic as a Long-Term Front Runner of the United Nations
Human Rights Council**

Myth or Reality?



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I hereby declare that this thesis is solely my own original work based on the literature and resources stated in the references section.

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*"The United Nations was not created in order to bring us to heaven,
but in order to save us from hell."*

Dag Hammarskjöld, former United Nations Secretary-General

List of Abbreviations

CSFR	Czech and Slovak Federative Republic
EEG	Eastern European Group
EU	European Union
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PRC	People's Republic of China
UN	United Nations
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WEOG	Western European and Others Group

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Introduction

The decades following the end of World War II witnessed a series of unprecedented developments altering the character of the global international system. Such changes also happened in one specific field that gained its importance, became an interest of experts, activists, as well as the general public and spread across all continents and agendas of the international community. The considered area of human rights has, after more than 70 years of evolution, become an integral part of the international community institutionalized in the United Nations (UN), and it has experienced times of rapid progress as well as an impasse.

Speaking of research in the field of human rights, several statements need to be made. Firstly, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC or Council) serves as the principal body in the concerned area. Therefore, observations, descriptions, and analyses of the UNHRC are essential and can help our understanding of the area and enhance the endeavour to strengthen the system that would effectively promote and protect all human rights. Secondly, identically to other fields of research, qualitative as well as quantitative approaches can be applied. Both approaches can bring fruitful outcomes as they examine the object of the study from different perspectives and use specific logics. (Goertz & Mahoney, 2012, pp. 1–15) Even though, in the case of the UNHRC, an extensive collection of literature can be found, a closer look into the content of the studies shows that the quantitative approach is lacking behind the qualitative.

The described tendency is even more visible in research dedicated to the behaviour of states within the UNHRC. This area of research is significant as the UN system is built on Westphalian principles of international order, where sovereign states are the main actors. And as states play such an essential role in the system, its examination is of high importance. However, there is only a handful of research concerning the behaviour and work of states, in this study termed as activity. To mention some of them, there are works focused on a groups of states such as *Of shaming and bargaining: African states and the UPR* by Allehone Mulugeta Abebe, studies of emerging powers in *Rising Powers and Human Rights: The India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum at the HRC* by Eduard Jordaan, or examinations of great powers in *More of the Same or Something Different? Preliminary Observations on the Contribution of Universal Periodic Review with Reference to the Chinese Experience* by Rhona K. M. Smith or *The United Kingdom, the United Nations Human Rights Council and the first cycle of the Universal Periodic Review* by Leanne Cochrane and Kathryn McNeilly. Presented studies genuinely portray the actual state of research in the concerned field, which is fragmented and

lacks a common approach. Moreover, the studies have mostly a very narrow scope limited only to one specific area of the UNHRC work or to individual states.

Therefore, the creation of a common approach could be the solution to the current state of the research. Examples of good practice can be found in the work of Federico Merke and Gino Pauselli, *Foreign Policy and Human Rights Advocacy: An Exercise in Measurement and Explanation*, proposing the creation of an index of activity that would help in comparing the states' activity. Another example of an attempt to overcome the non-existence of a common approach can be found in the study by Lucie Hanzlíčková, Irena Melounová and Štěpánka Zemanová, *The Czech Republic in the UN Human Rights Council 2011–2014*, where the authors propose their own approach formed as a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Mentioned shortcomings of the existing approaches are taken into consideration in this study. Therefore, the evaluation of the activity of states during the whole existence of the UNHRC is based on a combination of approaches proposed by F. Merke & G. Pauselli and L. Hanzlíčková et al.

The study itself is divided into two parts. After a brief overview of the humanist tradition developments in the Czech lands, a qualitative analysis focused on relevant governmental documents, as well as strategic foreign policy conceptions, is performed. The outcome of the analysis should reveal whether an effect of change of governments on the activity of the Czech Republic on the UNHRC level could be observed. Therefore, the findings are evaluated in conjunction with data on the Czech Republic's activity in the UNHRC since its creation in 2006. The second part presents a data analysis of the activity of selected member states of two UN regional groups, the Eastern European Group (EEG) and the Western European and Others Group (WEOG). Collected data are analysed from various perspectives. Firstly, the activity of the Czech Republic is compared with the overall average activity of both regional groups and then with the activity of the three best-performing states from each group. Secondly, the analysis of the Czech Republic and best-performing states is executed on the lower level of individual indicators, and the activity is evaluated and compared according to the observed indicators. Thirdly, the overall tendencies of Czech activity are examined in more detail on the level of individual sessions of the UNHRC.

The relevance of examining specifically the activity of the Czech Republic is based on the author's pilot study *Aktivita České republiky v Radě OSN pro lidská práva v období 2019–2020* (Activity of the Czech Republic in the United Nations Human Rights Council during 2019–2020), which analysis supported the presumption of high activity of the state based on the long-term importance of human rights segment for the Czech foreign policy. This study

builds on mentioned empirical knowledge and tests the presumption of high activity on a larger data sample.

As for the methodology, the first part analyses the content of key governmental documents concerning the matter of human rights within the Czech foreign policy throughout the time frame of analysis that is set from the year 2006, the creation of the UNHRC, until the last session of 2022. The examination of the documents is complemented by applying the extended Mower Criteria, helping summarise the analysis outcomes in a more structured manner. The outcomes of the document analysis serve to uncover the scope of changes in political approaches towards the field of human rights and explore the relevance of research in this area. A more detailed examination, including other relevant elements, such as governmental action in the international dimension of human rights, is behind the scope of this study. The second quantitative part of the study analyses the Czech Republic's activity by creating an index of activity that consists of three indicators. Their selection is based on Merke & Pauselli and Hanzlíčková et al. studies and complemented to include and thus measure all relevant aspects of the UNHRC work. The first indicator measures the activity as a number of sponsored resolutions as the most important outcome of the UNHRC's work. The second indicator is set to measure the number of statements delivered throughout the UNHRC sessions, as they represent most of the state's activity. And thirdly, the last indicator measures the activity in the Universal Periodic Review process (UPR), one of the most recognized activities of the UNHRC, by measuring the number of presented recommendations. The indicators are weighted according to the degree of the state's involvement, and the index of activity is a combination of all three indicators.

Even though the study is a continuation of the author's pilot study, several alterations are made to the theoretical and methodological framework. The main reasons for the changes described below are to identify new relevant areas for examination, in this case, the influence of governments on the state's activity within the UNHRC, and to allow the creation of a more precise dataset and, subsequently, outcomes of the analysis. The theoretical framework is focused on testing the relevance of studying the governmental influence on the matter under review. Its scope is limited exclusively to the Czech governments between 2006–2022 and should serve as the pilot study for possible further qualitative analyses. Furthermore, the methodological framework of the quantitative part is based mainly on the author's pilot study and utilises the idea of creation of an index of activity. However, changes are made to the weighting of the indicators within the index. The pilot study differentiates only between two forms of resolutions' sponsorship, main sponsor and co-sponsor. This categorisation is not

precise, and as the official reports also contain information about additional sponsors, adjustments impacting the indicator of resolutions are made. Specifically, main sponsors are perceived as the most demanding form of activity, the additional sponsors as the least demanding, and co-sponsors standing in the middle. Therefore, the index in this study contains three levels of sponsorship compared to the two levels in the pilot study, helping to measure reality more accurately. No changes were made to the other indicators, as they belong to the middle-range activity identically to the pilot study. The described adjustments are made, although they make the outcomes of both studies not comparable. However, the only lost data are of states not included in this study, as the whole period examined in the pilot study is covered. The number of non-included states equals one-fourth of the sample compared to the pilot study. Still, they are substituted by states with the highest probability of being the most active states of both groups, thus creating a more competitive sample for comparison with the activity of the Czech Republic.

The study is based on diverse sources of Czech as well as foreign academic literature concerning the field of human rights generally or specifically the UNHRC. However, the diversity of academic sources is limited in comparison with other areas of research. To mention the most influential publications and articles for the first part of the study, the article *Zahraniční politika České republiky a ochrana lidských práv* by Veronika Bílková, published in *Lidská práva v mezinárodní politice* edited by Pavel Dufek and Hubert Smekal is used as an elementary introduction into the matter from the Czech perspective, and it is also used to outline the approach of the Czech Republic to human rights. The comprehensive assessment of the text stands out, however, it misses the latest developments due to the publication date before the critical debate about the Czech foreign policy concepts between 2014 and 2015. Furthermore, the findings of V. Bílková in *Lidskoprávní rozměr české zahraniční politiky* published in the book *Česká zahraniční politika v roce 2015*, edited by Michal Kučera, serves as an addition to the previous publication. In this case, Bílková thoroughly describes the process of the reformulation of the approach to human rights and simultaneously gives a clearer idea about the work of the Czech Republic within the international area. Furthermore, Petr Preclík's text *Globalní systém ochrany lidských práv* published in *Lidská práva v mezinárodní politice* is useful in broadening the insight into the system of global human rights protection and its critical reflection.

The already mentioned key work of Hanzličková et al., *Česká republika v Radě OSN pro lidská práva 2011–2014*, offers a deep analysis of the activity of the Czech Republic covering the mandate of the Czech Republic in the UNHRC as well as casts more light on the creation

of contemporary Czech approach towards the field of human rights in the international area. The findings of the abovementioned study is combined with the research of Merke and Pauselli, *Foreign Policy and Human Rights Advocacy: An Exercise in Measurement and Explanation*, which focuses on the meaning of human rights on an international level, but first of all, brings the operationalization of the indicators measuring state activism. Worth mentioning is also further foreign research such as the Alfred Glen Mower's book, *Human Rights and American Foreign Policy: The Carter and Reagan Experiences*, which sets the foundation for assessment of the foreign policy in the field of human rights. Even though created in the late 1980s and for an evaluation of two US administrations, the theoretical framework is still relevant and helpful for examining the governments of the Czech Republic. Furthermore, Štěpánka Zemanová's study, *Zahraniční politika v oblasti lidských práv: Postup a metody analýzy* (Foreign Policy in the Field of Human Rights: Towards Methods of Analysis), represents an innovative view on the evaluation of the states' human rights policies as it proposes expansion of the Mower's criteria. This study applies the suggested alterations to the framework as they offer the realisation of a more precise analysis.

As the nature of the studied subject offers a relatively limited volume of academic literature, primary sources play an important role. They range from strategic and official governmental and UN documents to foreign and Czech media articles. The main sources of great value are the official information from within the UNHRC in the form of resolutions of the UNHRC or relevant working groups, documents and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Mentioned sources of information are used for data collection, and namely, reports from the particular session are the essential source. To evaluate the Czech governments' position towards the issue of human rights, key documents such as policy statements of the government and strategical conceptions of foreign policy are used. The availability of primary resources poses a challenge for the study as they are frequently incomplete or fragmented.

For the first part of the study, the author aims to answer the following research questions:

- *What are the overall tendencies of activity in the case of the Czech Republic?*
- *Can we observe the impact of changes of the Czech governments on the activity of the Czech Republic in the UNHRC?*

Answers to the presented research questions should help in the testing of the hypothesis:

The influence of changes of governments on the activity in the UNHRC in the Czech case is not present or is insignificant.

The second part aims at answering the subsequent research questions:

- *What is the activity of the Czech Republic in comparison with the EEG states?*
- *Is the activity of the Czech Republic comparable with those of WEOG states?*

The answers assist in testing the second hypothesis:

The activity of the Czech Republic is above the average of the EEG group, and it is comparable with the WEOG group.

The study is primarily oriented on answering questions regarding the activity of the Czech Republic, however, the nature of the analysis also provides new facts and insights into the work of states within the UNHRC. This is caused by the amount of analysed data that has never been collected before, and at the same time, the study's time frame allows to show the whole picture that is utmost up-to-date. Another contribution of the text to the academic debate is to present the first longitudinal study of the matter and thus fill this blank spot in the research. The text also has the ambition to present a study whose outcomes are relevant for the decision-makers and could help to strengthen and make the endeavour of the Czech foreign policy in the human rights segment more effective

1. Human Rights in the Czech Context

The opening part of the study discusses the Czech approach to human rights from both historical and contemporary perspectives. The first section briefly presents an age-long connection of humanist ideas with the Czech lands, including the formation of local humanist tradition with an emphasis on the influences of the 20th century. The second section discusses the development of the Czech Foreign Policy human rights dimension from 2006 until 2022. More specifically, policy statements of the monitored governments and relevant foreign policy concepts in effect during the studied period are analysed to shed more light on the content of the human rights dimension and its transformation throughout the existence of the UNHRC. The last section summarises and evaluates alteration in the Czech approach using the extended Mower criteria.

1.1 Historical Developments

The contemporary focus of the Czech foreign policy towards the protection and promotion of human rights originates from the intellectual tradition of humanism present in the Czech lands, and at the same time, reflects the historical experience with totalitarian regimes of the 20th century.

The ideas of humanism itself are closely linked to the spread of Renaissance values and ideas from the Northern Italian city-states. The most essential is a call for the human to return to the centre of attention, complemented by the possibilities of an education and upbringing that deals specifically with the human and leads to personal development and deeper knowledge. Humanism takes Renaissance ideas further and, as a literary and philosophical movement, seeks to educate for humanity. In other words, it is a set of spiritual norms and a way of acting that makes a person human and, beyond education, emphasizes humanity and dignity. (Linhart, Petrusek, Vodáková & Maříková, 1996, p. 391) In the Czech context, Bohemian humanism is particularly associated, among other authors, with Jan Amos Comenius or with the activities of the evangelical church, the Unity of the Brethren (*Jednota bratrská*).

Humanist tradition in the Czech lands has a long history dating back to the Middle Ages, more specifically, the first traces can be found during the reign of King Charles IV. Bohemian humanism gained its momentum during the 16th century and was later disrupted on 8 November 1620 by the defeat of the Bohemian estates at the Battle of White Mountain. (Naughton, 2018a; Naughton, 2018b) The collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire enabled the return of the Czech humanist tradition after a centuries-long interruption. The most prominent humanist of the First Czechoslovak Republic was its first president, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, who

published his views on Czech national goals even before the establishment of independent Czechoslovakia.

Masaryk considered the era of Czech humanism of the early modern period to be the most significant time of the past. He describes humanity as a historical, national, and most importantly Czech ideal, considers it to be the main task and purpose of the Czech nation and stresses the necessity of a systematic activity in its fulfilment. (Masaryk, 1908, p. 183) The Second World War interrupted the development, and the discontinuity persisted even after the defeat of the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis. Although Czechoslovakia was one of the 51 founding members of the UN, it abstained from voting on the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, along with the entire Eastern bloc, South Africa and Saudi Arabia. (UN Digital Library, 1948) Czechoslovakia thus refused to uphold the ideals of humanism, and the newly established discourse persisted until the so-called Velvet Revolution.

Another significant milestone in Czechoslovak history was the 1975 Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The Helsinki Final Act, joined by 35 states including Czechoslovakia, established the principles of relations between the participating states. The ten-point document contained a commitment of the signatories to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms and to accept human rights obligations arising from both the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights treaties. (Flegl & Mišoň, 1989, pp. 50–51) In the year following the signing, the civil initiative Charter 77 was formed, criticizing human rights violations in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic as non-compliance with its international human rights obligations. Internal criticism of human rights conditions by dissidents, supported by Western states, contributed to the fall of the communist regime, which was replaced by the rule of law and democracy. (Bílková, 2020, p. 11) In the early 1990s, the former dissidents were behind the foreign policy reorientation of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic (CSFR) back towards the ideals of humanism and human rights. A central role in formulating the approach towards the human rights agenda was once again played by the president, in this case, Václav Havel.

The human rights dimension of the foreign policy was to incorporate Czechoslovakia's historical experience with totalitarianism, which was to be shared with other states. In this context, foreign policy was to promote and spread the ideas of democracy even beyond human rights. Moreover, subscribing to the values of humanism was a step towards a 'return to Europe'. In other words, to the values underpinning the Western states and organisations that the CSFR was planning to join. (Bílková, 2014, pp. 378–379) The continuation of the humanist tradition was later transferred to the foreign policy of the Czech Republic after the division of the CSFR

at the turn of 1992 and 1993. A strong emphasis on human rights issues is thus still present in Czech foreign policy today.

1.2 Evolution of Human Rights Dimension of Czech Foreign Policy

The following section examines the alterations in the approach of Czech governments towards the human rights dimension of foreign policy from 2006 until 2022. The analysis explores the contributions of each government and the extent of modification to the human rights dimension made. The key conceptual documents, namely, policy statements of the governments, concepts of the Czech foreign policy and specific concepts regarding human rights and development, are the main sources of the analysis.

With two exceptions, all Czech governments in power during the studied period are considered. The first exception is the government of Jiří Paroubek, which is omitted as it was in power from April 2005 and concluded its term in August 2006. Therefore, the impact on the policy and, more importantly, on the activities of the Czech Republic in the UNHRC is considered negligible. Second, both governments of Mirek Topolánek are studied jointly as a separate analysis would not yield new insights. The described decision is made on the grounds of the short duration of Topolánek's first government and identical policy statements of both governments in a studied matter.

1.2.1 Key Conceptual Documents Overview

The primary purpose of the foreign policy of states is the defence of national interests, the promotion of national priorities and, last but not least, the presentation and dissemination of advocated values. (Bílková, 2014, p. 374) In the case of the Czech Republic, human rights have long been among the principal values of foreign policy. (MZV, 2021) However, until 2015 no detailed concept clearly setting out the goals and means towards the promotion and protection of human rights was formulated. Thus, until 2015 the Czech Republic's foreign policy actions in the area lacked transparency, long-term stability, and continuity.

Until the breakthrough period between 2014–2015, when the current *Human Rights and Transition Promotion Policy Concept of the Czech Republic* was formulated based on a society-wide debate, decisions had been based on established customs, traditions, or one-off political decisions. (Bílková, 2008, p. 9) The only previous effort to formulate a similar document took place in 2002 in the form of *the Concept of Czech Foreign Policy in the Field of Human Rights for the period 2000–2002*, which was subsequently replaced by the general *Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy for 2003–2006*.

The creation of a conceptual document that would determine the direction of foreign policy towards human rights began to be discussed in 2014 against the backdrop of Russia's military intervention in Ukraine and the increasingly visible inclination of Czech President Miloš Zeman towards the People's Republic of China (PRC). The concerns of the expert community about the deviation of the direction of human rights foreign policy intensified after the visit of the then Foreign Minister Lubomír Zaorálek to the PRC, which was the first Czech visit at the level of foreign minister since 1999, and the subsequent interview with First Deputy Foreign Minister Petr Drulák, who described the existing concept of human rights policy as incorrect and indicated a possible change of direction towards a less confrontational approach with a greater emphasis on development policy. (Lidovky.cz, 2014; Šafaříková, 2014)

The debate on the form of the concept itself was focused on its scope, the number of human rights issues to be addressed by diplomacy, the list of priority states and the policy instruments. The expert community presented two opposing approaches that were narrow and broad in focus. The narrow, traditional approach encouraged orientation on a limited range of so-called first-generation human rights, promotion of selected topics and policies in culturally proximate states or those with communist governments, mainly through coercive means of force. The broad approach proposed a conceptual shift towards focusing the policy on all three generations of human rights, without any thematic and territorial limitations, and with dialogue as the main tool instead of coercion. (Bílková, 2020, pp. 12–13)

The exchange of views was concluded in the summer of 2015, with the adoption of both the general *Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy* and the *Human Rights and Transition Promotion Policy Concept of the Czech Republic*. The adopted version of the concepts gives an impression of promoting a broader perception. However, the extension of scope to all generations of human rights is only declaratory, and fundamental points, such as the thematic and territorial priorities, remain unchanged.

1.2.2 Mirek Topolánek's Governments

The examination of the relevant conceptual documents shows mostly continuity to the previous approaches. The exception is *the Policy Statement*, whose content concerning the human rights dimension is general and non-specific, however, it presents a more proactive approach to the promotion of democracy at the same time.

The only specific declaration concerns the steps "*... that lead to redress wherever people are deprived of their basic human rights, especially steps leading to the liberation of people imprisoned or even tortured for their political or religious views.*" (ÚV, 2007, p. 18) The

emphasis on democracy is present in preceding conceptual documents and is a long-term part of the Czech discourse. Nonetheless, the stress on the matter differs from the previous approaches: *"The Czech Republic will support democratisation processes everywhere in the world, especially in Europe and its vicinity, as an expression of our global co-responsibility."* (Ibid.) The same importance of support for democracy in conjunction with human rights is also defined as an objective towards the formulation of the EU foreign policy, where the Czech Republic *"... will also advocate that the requirement for a certain standard of democracy and respect for human rights should be a fundamental basis for the EU's common foreign and security policy."* (Ibid.)

The main conceptual document in effect was *the Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy for 2003–2006*, formulated in 2003. Its content remained unchanged until the fall of the second Topolánek's government in mid-2009. The document confirms the importance of the human rights dimension and its mainstreaming, accents the inalienability of natural human rights and support for the promotion of the rule of law and democracy. (Bílková, 2007; MZV, 2003) A specific concept dealing with the objectives and tools, defining thematic and territorial priorities of the human rights dimension, was missing. The only such documents were the outdated *Concept of Czech Foreign Policy in the Field of Human Rights for the period of 2000–2002* and *the Transition Promotion Concept* from 2005. In effect, the absence of a concept regarding the human rights dimension and only partially defined objectives and tools made the policy less transparent and predictable.

In 2010, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) published a short internal document formulated in 2007, *The Thematic Priorities of the Czech Foreign Policy in the field of Human Rights*. It divides human rights into three categories and, in line with the approach of Topolánek's government, emphasises the promotion and protection of political and civil rights. Another internal document, *the Manual for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic: Human Rights*, intended to provide an overview for the ministerial staff in view of preparations for the first Czech presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The preparatory works on the Presidency produced additional documents further complementing the above-mentioned concepts. Namely, *the Sectoral Priorities of the Czech Presidency in EU 2009* confirms the importance of the human rights dimension. More importantly, the document presents a list of priorities in the human rights area, where it sets out the objective of *"...increasing the consistency and readability of the EU in this area, based on strengthening the interdependence of existing EU mechanisms and instruments."* (ÚV, 2008, p. 8) The thematic priorities of the Presidency in the human rights dimension were focused mainly

on supporting human rights defenders, improving cooperation with the non-governmental sector and making EU financial instruments more effective.

1.2.3 Jan Fischer's Government

Given the nature of the government, which was in power only for 15 months, the essential conceptual documents were adopted from previous governments, and no further initiative to rework them was taken. *The Policy Statement* refers to "protecting human rights and strengthening democracy in the world" as one of the government's priorities but without further elaboration. (ÚV, 2009, p. 3)

1.2.4 Petr Nečas' Government

Topolánek's era meant only a partial development in the key conceptual documents concerning human rights. By contrast, the government of Petr Nečas revised several pivotal concepts indicating a shift towards a more active human rights policy.

The Policy Statement contains a more detailed section on human rights than the statements of previous governments. Specifically, it states: "The Government considers the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms to be one of the key areas of the Czech Republic's foreign policy." (ÚV, 2010, p. 13) And continues with a declaration of an effort to build "... a stable international system based on peace, security, sustainable development and human rights." (Ibid., p. 12) The thematic focus is consistent with the approaches of previous years, focusing on support for civil society, human rights defenders, freedom of expression and the media, and building of the rule of law and democratic institutions. Therefore, the Nečas government continues to take a narrow approach focused almost exclusively on political and civil rights.

The persisting emphasis on the first generation of human rights can also be observed in relation to the development cooperation and transition promotion policy, which, according to the text of the Statement, will "support the development of democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the strengthening of the rule of law as fundamental prerequisites for the stability and prosperity of partner states". (Ibid.) Furthermore, in relation to engagement at the level of multilateral international institutions the Statement proclaims, that the government "...will focus on promoting the independence of UN monitoring bodies and the credibility of the international human rights protection system in general." (Ibid., p. 13)

In 2011 the new *Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy* was published, replacing the preceding concept from 2003. The document confirms the perception of the inalienability of natural human rights as one of the core foreign policy principles and identifies

human dignity and responsibility towards human rights as inviolable values. The Concept emphasises support for the promotion of democracy, which corresponds to the narrowing of human rights policy, in particular to transition promotion. Similarly, no changes are made in terms of thematic and geographical priorities, and the principal multilateral platforms remain the UN, the EU, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Particularly, the Czech Republic will focus in the UNHRC on "*...the issue of freedom of expression, human rights defenders, the prohibition of torture and the fight against flagrant human rights violations in individual states.*" (MZV, 2011a, p. 8) At the EU level, the Czech Republic will advocate for "*...a realistic EU policy defending human rights and promoting democratisation processes and reflecting historical differences and the future potential of today's diverse world.*" (Ibid., p. 11) Regarding bilateral relations, the importance of human rights dialogue is explicitly emphasised in the case of the Russian Federation and PRC.

In the same year, the new *Security Strategy of the Czech Republic* was published, building on the previous documents and classifying the promotion of democracy, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law as a core strategic interest of the Czech Republic. The document also confirms the government's activism in the field of human rights, stating that the Czech Republic is "*ready to participate in any enforcement actions taken by the international community to prevent massive human rights violations, in particular genocide and other crimes against humanity.*" (MZV, 2011b, p. 12)

The last updated document is *the Transition Promotion Concept*, issued in 2010, defining cooperation as an instrument to help protect and uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms and promote democracy. The thematic and territorial priorities are identical to those listed in the general Concept, and its promotion shall be conducted not exclusively via transition promotion but also through bilateral relations, multilateral instruments, and the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. The Transition Promotion Concept also represented the only document dealing specifically with human rights issues, as an updated document focused exclusively on the human rights dimension was missing.

1.2.5 Jiří Rusnok's Government

Similarly to Fischer's government, the key conceptual documents remained unchanged under the Rusnok's caretaker government. *The Policy Statement* refers to the foreign policy human rights dimension by merely saying: "*The Government of the Czech Republic will seek the widest possible cooperation on global issues, whether it is combating climate change, combating*

terrorism, and promoting human rights." (ÚV, 2013, p. 2) The rest of the section on foreign policy priorities suggests a more significant shift towards economic diplomacy.

1.2.6 Bohuslav Sobotka's Government

The government of Bohuslav Sobotka agrees with the previous governments on the importance of the human rights agenda in foreign policy and extends its scope to all generations of human rights. *The Policy Statement* mentions specifically that a particular emphasis will be placed "...on respect for the individual, on social and economic rights and the protection of the environment." and further affirms the premise "...that human rights include civil and political rights as well as economic, social and environmental rights..." (ÚV, 2014, pp. 17, 51) Furthermore, the government indicates the human rights agenda to be a priority at the UN and EU level. However, explicit reference to the promotion and protection of human rights is not present in the government's opening list of priorities. At the same time, in contrast to the approach of previous governments, less emphasis on transition promotion can be observed. Similarly, the limitation of the human rights agenda almost exclusively to the promotion of democracy is also not included.

The outlined changes needed to be incorporated into the conceptual documents. Therefore, after several months of inclusive consultations with the expert public, the reformulated *Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy* was published in 2015. In its list of foreign policy central values, the Concept states, among other things, "...universality and indivisibility of human rights, respect for human dignity, equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the UN Charter and international law." (MZV, 2015a, p. 3) The document enriches the Czech human rights discourse with a new concept of human dignity, which is superior to human rights, and through its fulfilment, human rights are to be secured. Development cooperation, humanitarian aid and support for international criminal justice are defined as instruments to ensure human dignity.

Overall, the change to the promotion of all generations of human rights is reflected in the Concept and in line with this new context, the central role of democratisation is absent. By contrast, the new concept of human dignity replaces the role of democracy promotion as a quasi-tool for the realisation of human rights. However, in terms of thematic and territorial priorities, the text does not depart from previous approaches, which is not consistent with the broadening of the policy's scope to all generations. Or, in the words of Veronika Bílková, "*No revolution has taken place...*" supported by a similar assessment by the Association for International Affairs. (Bílková, 2016, p. 1; Dostál, 2016, pp. 60–61)

In the same year the general Concept was introduced, the detailed *Human Rights and Transition Promotion Policy Concept of the Czech Republic* was published. After fifteen years, Czech foreign policy received a conceptual document defining its approach to the human rights agenda. Within its basic principles, the document emphasises that human rights policy "*...is not mutually exclusive with any of the other priority areas of Czech foreign policy, including security policy or export promotion.*" (MZV, 2015b, p. 3) The general objectives outline the policy's approach "*...to draw attention to human rights violations, regardless of where they occur, to bring concrete solutions, to improve the quality of life and to actively participate in the global dialogue on the protection of a dignified human life.*" (Ibid., p. 4) The main tool of the policy shall be dialogue conducted "*...both bilaterally and multilaterally, both with those who subscribe to the principles of liberal democracy and with those who follow a different path, both with governments and with civil society.*" (Ibid., p. 3) The thematic and territorial priorities follow the previous approaches with the exception of promotion of the issues related to employment and the environment.

1.2.7 Andrej Babiš's Governments

The following two governments of Andrej Babiš had not brought any change to the human rights dimension of Czech foreign policy. As the foreign policy conceptual documents remained intact, only the policy statements can serve as indicators of possible alterations in the approach.

The Policy Statement of the first Babiš's government contains only a general declaratory reference: "*A traditional part of Czech foreign policy is an emphasis on respect for human rights, including civil, political, economic, social, cultural and minority rights.*" Followed by another unspecific pronouncement declaring, "*We want to be active also in the field of development cooperation and humanitarian aid.*" (ÚV, 2018a)

In contrast, *the Policy Statement* of the second government completely omits the previous declarations and replaces them with a short declaration, "*Czech foreign policy will include an emphasis on respect for human rights.*", confirming the continuation of the approach of previous governments. (ÚV, 2018b, p. 30) At the same time, the Statement describes the actions in the human rights area only by stating, "*We will use our membership of the UN Human Rights Council for the period 2019 to 2021...*" (Ibid.)

1.2.8 Petr Fiala's Government

In *the Policy Statement* of the last government under review, a greater emphasis on human rights issues can be observed compared to the preceding two governments of Andrej Babiš. The Statement stresses explicitly that "*Foreign policy will have an unquestionable Euro-Atlantic*

orientation, an emphasis on stable partnerships with democratic states around the world and on the protection of human rights and democracy." (ÚV, 2022, p. 3)

The government also stresses the importance of activities in the human rights dimension as a long-standing and distinctive characteristic of Czech foreign policy, complemented by a declaration: *"We will renew the tradition of the 'Havel-style' foreign policy, including support for the development and transition promotion."* (Ibid., p. 25)

The return to an active prioritization of the human rights dimension is further affirmed in the preamble of the section on foreign policy. More specifically, the government stresses the importance of *"...stable partnerships with democratic states worldwide and protection of human rights and democracy..."* complemented by the promotion of *"...European values in the world."* (Ibid.) At the same time, the document sets out a specific objective of submitting a bill sanctioning gross violations of human rights, the so-called Magnitsky Act. The deadline for the proposal submission to the Parliament, stated in the document, was met by the law's adoption in the second half of 2022. (iRozhlas, 2022)

Regarding the foreign policy conceptual documents, no changes were made by the end of 2022. However, in early 2023, the MFA announced that the reformulation of the general concept of Czech foreign policy is in progress with the intention to update the policy in light of contemporary foreign policy developments and, among other things, respond to *"...the erosion of respect for human rights"*. (ČT24, 2023) Whether the ministry was considering a revision of the detailed concept on human rights was unknown.

1.2.9 Evolution of Human Rights Dimension of Czech Foreign Policy According to Extended Mower Criteria

To summarise the analysis of the developments within Czech foreign policy in the field of human rights during 2006–2022, the study employs the so-called Mower criteria, introduced by Alfred Glen Mower to compare the US foreign policies of Jimmy Carter's and Ronald Reagan's administrations. (Mower, 1987) In the Czech context, the original five criteria have been complemented by Veronika Bílková and Štěpánka Zemanová to a total of nine criteria consisting of *reasons, priorities, definitions, objectives, scope, actors, instruments, attitudes, and typology*. (Bílková, 2014; Zemanová, 2007) The subsequent evaluation follows all nine criteria and is not performed separately for each government due to the nature of alterations in the approach towards the human rights agenda. Therefore, the period in consideration is examined as a whole.

The criterion of *the reasons* examines a state's external and internal motives to include a human rights dimension into its foreign policy. In the case of the Czech Republic, an internal influence of the historical tradition of humanism extended by the experience with totalitarianism are present. The external influence is connected mainly with the subscription to the values of the Euro-Atlantic area after 1989.

Regarding *the priorities*, human rights rank among the key areas of Czech foreign policy interests. However, an oscillation between stronger and weaker emphasis on the matter can be observed. A minor focus on the human rights dimension is present in the policy statements of the governments of Andrej Babiš and Jan Fischer. Furthermore, the Policy Statement of Jiří Rusnok's government indicates a shift towards prioritising economic diplomacy at the expense of the human rights policy.

Looking at *the definitions*, the studied period can be divided into pre-2015 and post-2015 eras. The approach of governments until the year 2015 followed a narrow definition comprising of first-generation human rights and the promotion of selected thematic priorities associated with the promotion and protection of political and civil rights. In 2015, the Bohuslav Sobotka's government published the reformulated foreign policy concepts applying a broader definition. The new definition particularly emphasizes the universality and indivisibility of human rights and encompasses all three generations of human rights.

Similarly, the foreign policy *objectives* changed. The main objectives until 2015 consisted of support for democracy, the rule of law, transition promotion, and protection of political and civil rights. The Sobotka's government altered the previous focus on the objectives associated with first-generation human rights by including all generations of human rights and introducing the concept of human dignity. However, as the thematic priorities remained unchanged, the described modification of the approach was not reflected. Therefore, thematic and territorial priorities constitute long-term objectives. The same applies to maintaining the human rights agenda as a distinctive characteristic of foreign policy.

The scope, meaning territorial and thematic coverage, is limited to an enumeration of states in the vicinity or with totalitarian governments. As described above, the thematic focus remains within the first generation of human rights.

Bílková's additional criterion considers *the actors* making and implementing the human rights policy. These are represented by the MFA, the government, the President of the Czech

Republic, the Ministry of Justice, the EU, and non-governmental organisations.¹ (Bílková, 2014, p. 388)

Zemanová's three additional criteria consider: Firstly, *the instruments* covering both bilateral and multilateral instruments. All observed governments defined policy tools as negotiations with an emphasis on dialogue, transition promotion programmes, the coercive use of force, and activities in international organisations. However, differences in preferred instruments, e.g., inclination towards dialogue and activities on multilateral fora of Sobotka's government, can be observed.

Secondly, *the attitudes*, ranging from nationalist to internationalist, are in the Czech case purely internationalist, meaning that human rights are perceived as a matter of the international community.

And thirdly, *the typology* distinguishing states into human rights initiators, inactive and opponents. The Czech Republic, by its human rights policy settings and activities, is among the first category of human rights initiators. Although, the approaches present in the policy statements of Fischer's, Rusnok's, and Babiš's governments show less interests in the matter than the remaining governments under review.

¹ At the level of the MFA, the actors include the Human Rights and Transition Policy Department, the United Nations Department, the International Law Department and other relevant territorial departments, permanent missions and embassies.

2. Analysis of Czech Republic's Activity in the United Nations Human Rights Council

The second half of the study offers an analysis of the Czech Republic's activity within the UNHRC from its foundation in 2006 until the last session of 2022. The analysis is conducted as a comparison of the Czech activity with 23 selected states from the WEOG and the EEG regional groups. This chapter also examines existing approaches, presents the methodological framework used for the analysis, and describes the main challenges of the analysis. Furthermore, the in-depth overview of the methodology describes the formation of the activity index, methods used for data collection and selection of states.

2.1 Existing Approaches

The research regarding the activity of states within multilateral fora has its representation in the scholarly literature, and studies considering the UNHRC particularly can be divided into several categories. The majority of the research is focused on the activity of great or regional powers (Cochrane & McNeilly, 2013; Jordaan, 2015; Smith, 2011), some examine groups of states (Abebe, 2009), and only a handful of papers are considering the work of middle-size or small states.

However, the main challenge lies in the limitation of most of the research to the qualitative analysis and in the lack of an overall common quantitative approach. The absence of quantitative studies can be partially explained by the lack of common methodology, as Lucie Hanzlíčková et al. argue. (Hanzlíčková, Melounová & Zemanová, 2019, s. 248) Moreover, only the aforementioned article by L. Hanzlíčková et al. and Federico Merke and Gino Pauselli study offer quantitative methodological frameworks suitable for analysing the Czech Republic's activity. (Merke & Pauselli, 2013) Therefore, the methodology in this study combines both frameworks and strives to create the most appropriate common approach.

Hanzlíčková et al. focus the quantitative part of their study on two dimensions of state engagement. Firstly, they examine Czech activity regarding the drafting of resolutions and positions of the state when voting was carried out. Secondly, a sum of all interventions at the plenum is calculated. Both dimensions are complemented by and combined with qualitative analysis and, therefore, cannot be applied in the same form for a large-N study.

F. Merke and G. Pauselli construct an index measuring the level of human rights foreign policy activism consisting of four indicators: (1) the state of signing and ratification of international human rights treaties, (2) the number of interventions delivered at the UNHRC plenum together with the number of sponsored resolutions, (3) importance assigned to human

rights in bilateral foreign aid programmes, and (4) the number of accepted refugees. The suggested framework is not used in its proposed form, as the analysis in this study is solely oriented on measuring the Czech Republic's activity in the UNHRC.

Therefore, considering the first approach, the observation of states' sponsoring and co-sponsoring of resolutions is included in the index, as the resolutions represent an essential instrument of the UNHRC. However, states' position in cases of voting is not included as it cannot explain the activity without further qualitative analysis of each state and work of the UNHRC, and also because of its better suitability for normative rather than explanatory study. The second dimension, calculating the number of all speeches delivered by a state, is used in the same manner as the study proposes taking into account the role of the UNHRC as the principal human rights multilateral forum.

The above-described two indicators create the foundation of the index, and the inclusion of the same indicators by Merke and Pauselli endorses their selection. The remaining indicators included in Merke and Pauselli's framework are not utilized since their different scope aims at a broader understanding of states' activity in the human rights dimension of international relations. On the other hand, full advantage is taken of the proposed arithmetical framework in the creation of the index and principles of indicators' weighting.

The selected indicators are further complemented to create more robust evidence of states' activity. Therefore, the third indicator of recommendations made during the UPR review process, as an essential component of the UNHRC competencies, is included. The described triad of indicators creates the overall index of states' activity.

2.2 Index of States' Activity in the UNHRC

The study's core consists of the activity index constituted of three indicators: (1) the number of sponsored resolutions (ranging between the main sponsoring, co-sponsoring, and additional sponsoring), (2) the number of interventions delivered at the UNHRC plenum, and (3) the number of recommendations made during the UPR process. The selected mix of indicators strives to cover the most significant competencies and functions of the UNHRC while being able to accurately measure the involvement of each state.

The indicator of resolutions is included to monitor the main tool of the UNHRC in establishing international human rights standards, addressing situations of human rights violation, and promoting human rights worldwide. The indicator of verbal interventions is also included as the Council shall fulfil the role of a forum for dialogue on human rights. The last

indicator of recommendations helps observe UPR as a key mechanism enabling the examination of human rights conditions in all UN member states. (UNGA, 2006)

The differentiation within the index is conducted on a scale of 1 to 3 points, where the higher the number, the higher the state involvement. The score in the case of *the indicator of resolutions* can range between 1 and 3 points for each resolution sponsored: the main sponsoring equals 3, co-sponsoring obtains 2, and additional sponsoring receives only 1 point. The activity within *the indicator of interventions* and *the indicator recommendations* is valued by the middle range score of 2 points for each intervention or recommendation. The score assigning follows the logic of measured activity demandingness as the main sponsor must exert the highest effort (in a draft preparing and steering of its negotiation) compared to the co-sponsoring and additional sponsoring but also activities of the other indicators. On the contrary, the least demanding activity is the additional sponsoring, only verbally supporting the agreed text before or after its adoption. Therefore, co-sponsoring, interventions and recommendations stand in the middle of the ranking as all require preparation in advance and generally show a proactive approach.

The index is created by calculating states' performance in each indicator using the aforementioned scoring and then summing all indicators. Subsequently, the sum of each state is divided by the highest possible score detected in the observed period. Or as demonstrated by the following formula:

$$X_Y = \frac{I_r + I_i + I_u}{N_a}$$

Where X_y represents the index of a particular state, I_r stands for the sum of assigned points within the indicator of resolutions, I_i for the sum of points in the interventions' indicator, I_u for the sum of points within the indicator of recommendations, and finally, N_a representing the sum of the highest possible scores measured in each session.

The main reason for dividing the scores by the highest figure is to allow an intelligible display of data as defining the highest level of activity makes data projection possible in percentages rather than an indefinite value. Furthermore, the index and the individual scores in absolute figures are used in the study according to their suitability for a particular part of the analysis.

2.3 Collection of Data

The dataset includes all regular sessions from the inception of the UNHRC in 2006 until the latest developments at the 51st session in 2022. It also consists of all sessions of the UPR until the 41st session, the last in the year 2022. The UNHRC special sessions are omitted as they would not substantially alter the overall tendencies. The majority of the dataset is based on the official Council's reports covering each session. In the case of the UPR recommendations, the primary source is the UPR Info Database, and the missing data are gathered from the working groups' reports. All data sources are publicly accessible on the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and UPR Info Database websites. (UPR Info, 2023)

Regarding the process of data collection, the resolutions' indicator covers all adopted resolutions, and due to specific conditions and the conduct of initial sessions, all Council's decisions are also included. Reports differentiate between three categories of support for a draft text, indicating the level of support and, more importantly, the degree of the state's involvement in the negotiation process. (FDFA, 2015, pp. 20–22) The interventions' indicator includes all statements, questions posed during interactive dialogues, explanations of votes, rights of reply, and general comments made during the sessions. The general debate under item 6 of the UNHRC agenda dedicated to the UPR is also included. The last indicator of recommendations concerns the total number of UPR recommendations made by each state per session. Actions made on behalf of a group of states (mainly the EU) are understood and counted as the activity of each state in question.

The group of 23 selected states for the observation consists of 8 members of the EEG and 15 members of the WEOG UN regional group. The sample includes states falling into diverse categories, such as the permanent members of the UN Security Council (France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, and the United States), states with populations over 20 million (Germany, Italy, Poland or Ukraine) or under 2 million (Estonia or Iceland). Furthermore, 16 states are members of the European Union (including the UK and Croatia), and three are non-European.

The main aim in generating the sample is to identify states with the highest probability of being the most active states within the UNHRC, thus creating a competitive setting for a comparison with the Czech Republic's activity. Therefore, the selected states have to fulfil the following criteria:

The state must actively demonstrate its interest in human rights protection, in this study considered as more than two memberships in the UNHRC. In the case of the EEG group, 6 states comply with the requirements, however, two other states are added. Croatia is included

because of its highly above-average performance in the author's pilot study, and Estonia on the grounds of ranking among the top 20 states within three human rights indexes as the only EEG state.² Only 7 members of the WEOG fulfil the criterion of the UNHRC membership, and as the group is expected to contain the most active states of the sample (confirmed by the pilot study), states with more than one membership and ranking among the top 20 states of the aforementioned indexes are included. The exceptions are Denmark, Finland, New Zealand, and Iceland as the former three are among the top 10 states of all three indexes, and Iceland was among the most active states of the pilot study.

² The considered indexes are: The Human Freedom Index of 2021, the human rights indicator of the Fragile State Index of 2022, and Freedom House Index of 2021.

Follows a list of the selected states and their abbreviations in the three-letter system according to standard ISO 3166-1 alpha-3 codes, under which they are also referred to in the study.

Table 1 – List of Selected States

State	Alpha-3 codes	States	Alpha-3 codes
Australia	AUS	Italia	ITA
Austria	AUT	Netherlands	NLD
Belgium	BEL	New Zealand	NZL
Croatia	HRV	Poland	POL
Czech Republic	CZE	Russia Federation	RUS
Denmark	DNK	Slovakia	SVK
Estonia	EST	Slovenia	SVN
Finland	FIN	Spain	ESP
France	FRA	Switzerland	CHE
Germany	DEU	Ukraine	UKR
Hungary	HUN	United Kingdom	GBR
Iceland	ISL	United States	USA

Source: Author (based on the standard ISO3166-1 alpha-3 codes)

2.4 Limits and Challenges

Even though the primary data are well accessible, the nature of the study creates several challenges that need to be mentioned and taken into consideration.

First, the chosen criteria for states' selection may exclude states with high activity. Such an example could be Canada, which marked high activity during the data collection in some of the monitored periods. Nevertheless, the probability of the most active states' non-inclusion is substantially decreased as the number of observed states accounts for more than fifty percent considering the WEOG group.

Second, a major part of the analysis examines data aggregated by year rather than by session. This approach may conceal some realities, nonetheless, the principal endeavour of the research is to discover general tendencies, and a deeper exploration is behind the scope of this analysis.

Third and in relation to the previous, the indicator of recommendations or the index of a particular state may be influenced by its review within the UPR process, causing a decrease in the activity of the state in question. By contrast, an increase in activity can occur in the case of states holding the presidency of the Council of the European Union. Therefore, examining data by year is more appropriate as it partially reduces mentioned negative influences.

Fourth, the UPR sessions do not correspond precisely with the regular sessions of the UNHRC. Namely, the first UPR session was conducted in 2008; and during 2012, 2017, 2020, and 2022 only two instead of three sessions per year took place. This limit is taken into account throughout the analysis.

Fifth, the low activity during the initial sessions, partially caused by the nature of the sessions and postponed operation of the UPR, is addressed likewise the impact of the UPR sessions irregularity.

Sixth, another challenge is posed by the different formats of the reports and modification of the Council's work as both have developed over time and, together with the factual errors and errata, limit the accuracy of the dataset.

Lastly, the overall precision of the analysis may also be limited by the errors made during the creation of the dataset, considering the amount of data processed. Nevertheless, the maximum effort was made to minimize the possibility of mistakes, for instance, by setting uniform data collection and processing procedures and developing several control mechanisms.

2.5 Data Analysis

The eight-level analysis is performed as a comparison of the activity of the Czech Republic and the 23 selected states. The first section discusses the average activity of the whole sample, EEG and WEOG regional groups and compares the results with the Czech performance. The following section elaborates on the overall activity of all monitored states in detail. The third section offers a comparison with the activity of the best-performing states from both groups. Four subsequent sections present a detailed analysis by indicators. Specifically, they examine the sample's activity during 17 years of the UNHRC existence, the EEG and WEOG group activity in each indicator, the performance of the most active states in the indicators, and the best-performing states' average composition of activity. Finally, the eighth section examines in more detail the activity of the Czech Republic aggregated by individual sessions.

2.5.1 Overall UNHRC Activity

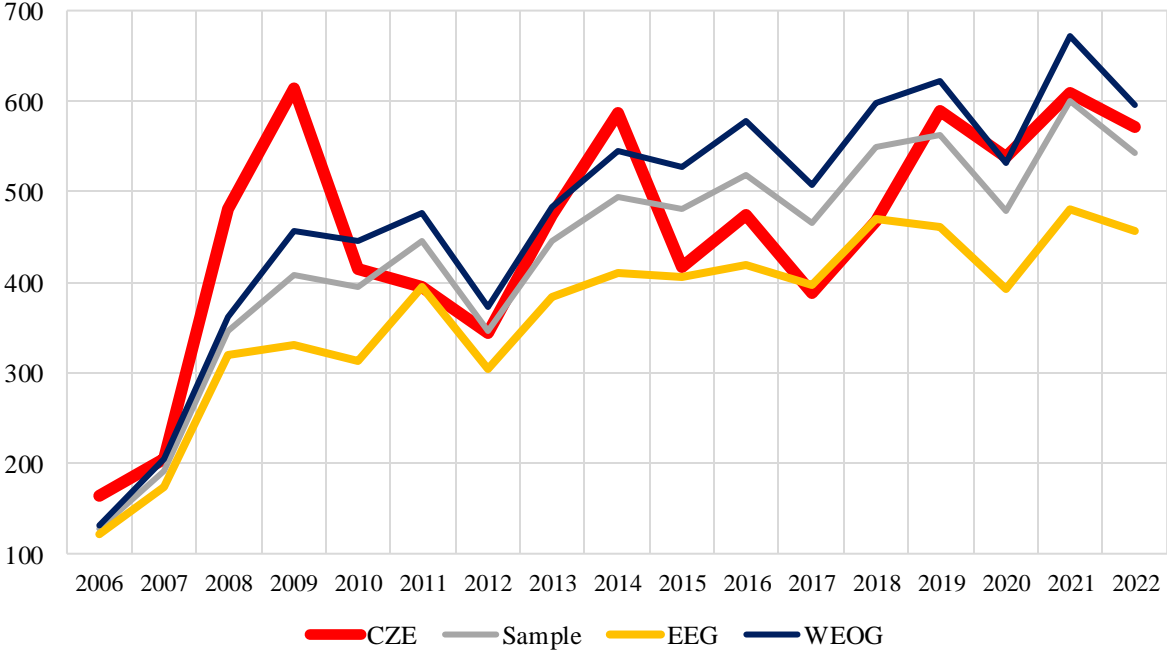
A brief look at Graph 1, showing the overall activity in absolute figures, reveals several facts. The Council's activity is growing over time, however, the year 2008 shall be considered as a starting line for some sections of the analysis as the UNHRC processes including the UPR are set in place and fully operational. Even if we adjust the data, the tendency of the activity remains increasing, starting at the sample's score of 346 and reaching an all-time high in 2021 with a score of 600 points. (For a detailed indicator-by-indicator analysis, see section 2.5.4)

If we compare the activity of the two groups with the sample's average, we find that their common feature is similarly increasing tendencies that almost replicate each other but at different levels. It is not surprising that the highest activity is measured in the case of the WEOG, constantly scoring above the average of the sample. On the contrary, the performance of the EEG is below average throughout the studied period. Furthermore, four distinct declines in activity are present, which apply for the years 2012, 2017, 2020, and 2022. The reason behind the decreases can be found in the previous section, as the mentioned years fully correspond with the list of a reduced number of UPR sessions. If the listed years had not been included, the rising linear tendency of the UNHRC average would be even more apparent.

Examining the Czech Republic's data, the following can be stated. The overall tendency is rising with significant decreases in the four above-stated years, but also a radical fall in 2010, continuing decline in 2011 and 2015. The latter three deviations can be explained by preceding abnormal rises. In the first case, the peak of the overall Czech activity surpassing the score of 600 and at the same time being high above the then average can be explained by the Czech presidency in the Council of the European Union during the first half of 2009.³ The following decline can thus be described as a correction back to the previous level of activity. Similarly, the pinnacle of 2014 can be related to the Czech vice-presidency of the UNHRC.

Compared with the EEG, the Czech activity is mostly above the group's average. Except for 2008, 2009, and 2014, the activity ranks under the WEOG performance. Moreover, the inter-annual growth between the years 2016–2019 and continuing in 2021 needs a closer inspection. (For a detailed session-by-session analysis, see section 2.5.8)

Graph 1 – Overall Activity 2006–2022



Source: Author (based on the Reports of the UNHRC on the 1st to the 51st session, the Reports of the Working Group on the UPR and the UPR Info Database)

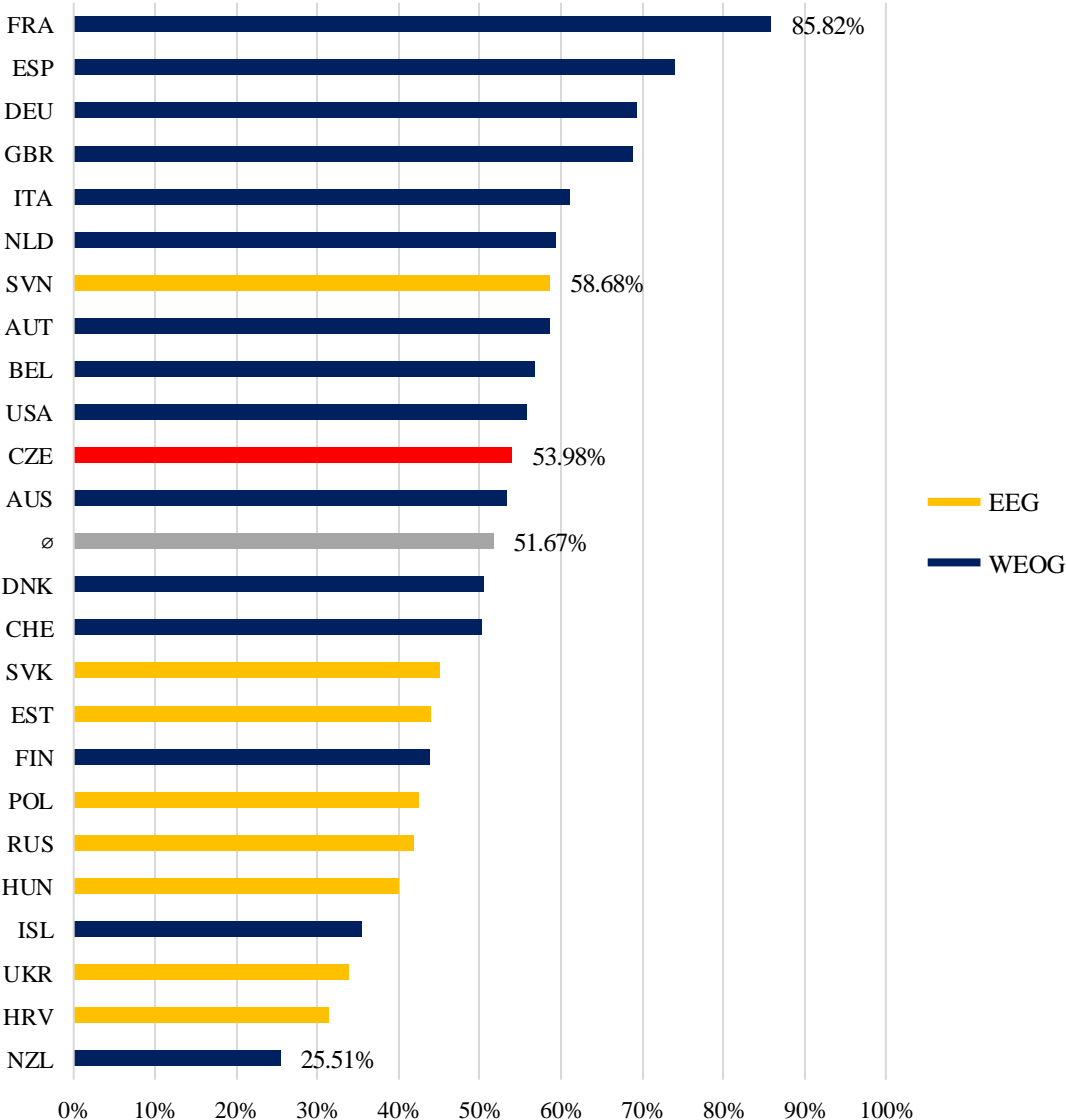
2.5.2 Performance of Sample

Graph 2 shows the average activity as a percentage considering the highest possible score. Even though the methodology of states' selection aims at choosing states with a great probability of being highly active, the gap between the first and the last observed state is vast, accounting for

³ State holding the presidency presents resolutions and delivers statements on behalf of the states of the EU.

60.31%. The average activity equals 51.67%, and most EEG members rank below the average, with the exceptions of Slovenia and the Czech Republic. However, five states out of the 15 members of the WEOG belong to the group being under the average. Three of such states fall into the category of the Nordic states, further supporting tendencies described in the author's pilot study, showing the 'golden standard' states not being as active as expected. (Brysk, 2009) The data also shows that the inclusion of the WEOG states not fulfilling the membership criterion has not helped to create a more competitive sample.

Graph 2 – Average Activity

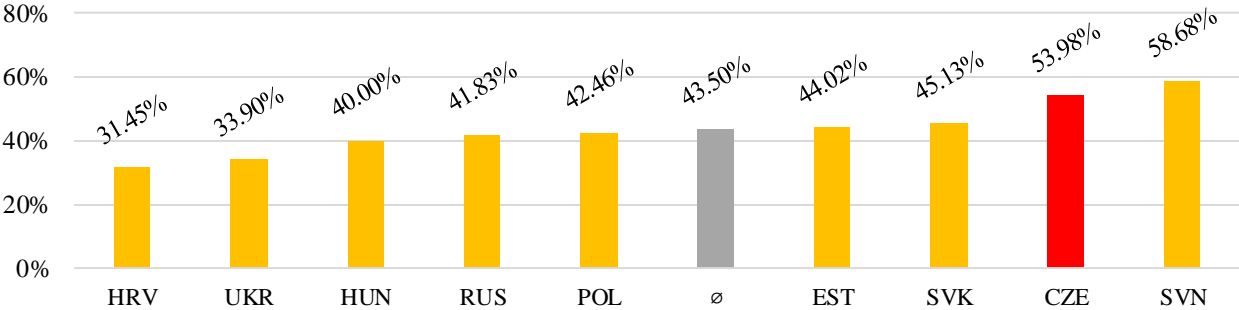


Source: Author (Ibid.)

That does not apply to the EEG states, as noticeable in Graph 3, where Estonia is among the four most active states. The inclusion of Croatia as the second state with an exception has not helped to create a better sample, as its overall activity is affected by accession to the EU

only in mid-2013, thus not fully participating in the group initiatives on behalf of the EU members during the pre-2013 sessions.

Graph 3 – EEG States Average Activity

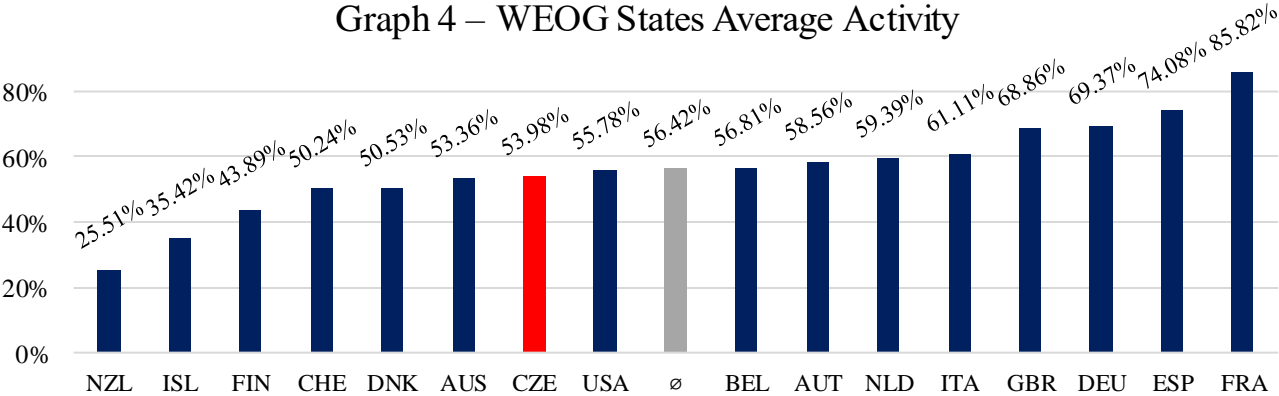


Source: Author (Ibid.)

A closer look at the performance of the Czech Republic shows its above-average activity, yet not being the first among the EEG members. The difference between the first two states equals 4.7%, and both surpassed the level of 50% as the only states of the group. The gap between the Czech Republic and the worst-performing state accounts for 22.53% and more than 10% compared to the average of the EEG.

Comparison with the WEOG states' performance in Graph 4 indicates different results. The most active state is better by 31.84% compared to the Czech Republic, and five states exceed the level of 60%. The Czech Republic is 2.44% below the group's average, and its performance is almost identical to the activity of the United States, which performance was influenced by limited activity in the UNHRC during the presidencies of George W. Bush and Donald Trump. Overall, the Czech Republic is the 11th most active state out of the 24 observed.

Graph 4 – WEOG States Average Activity

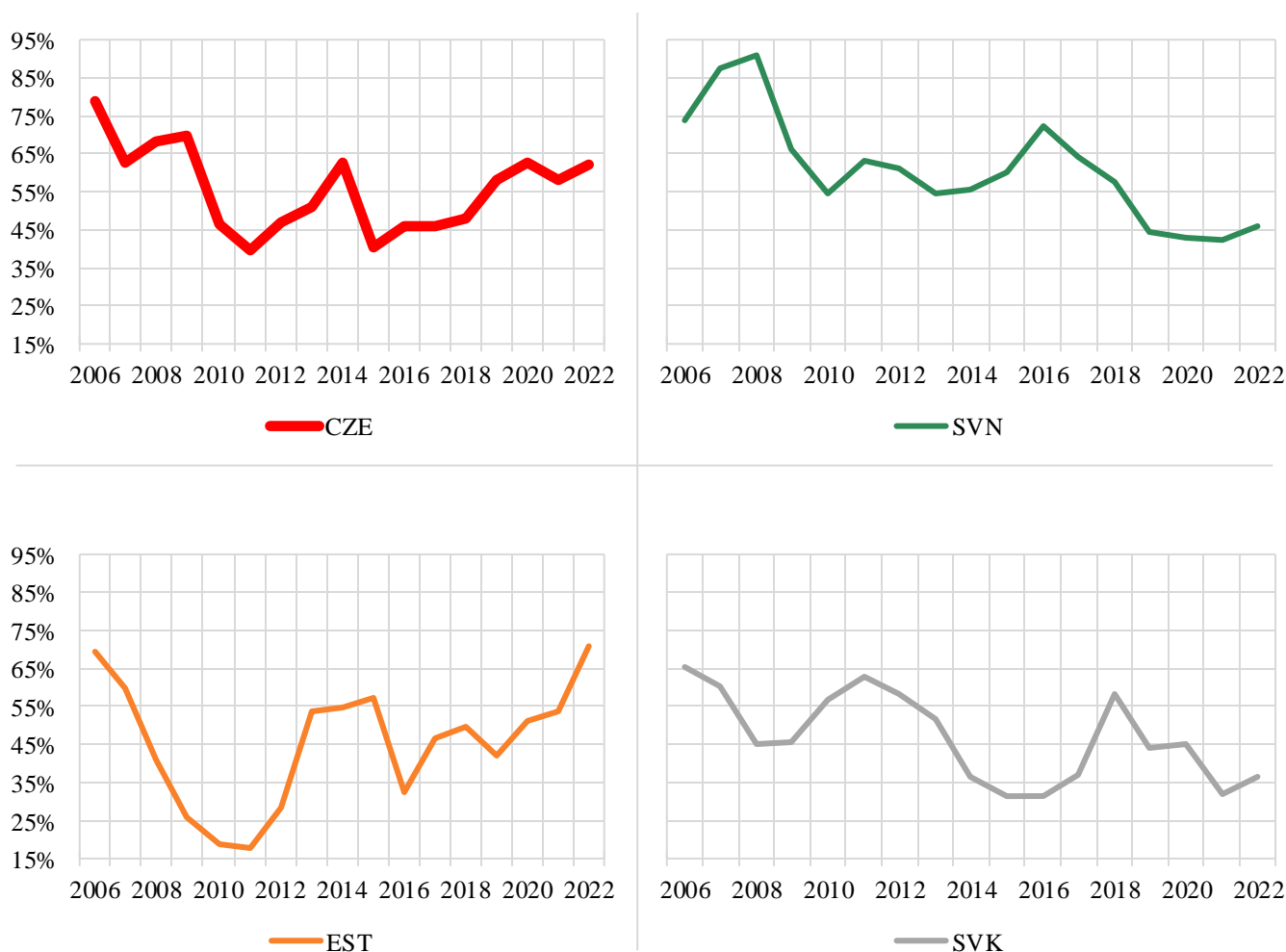


Source: Author (Ibid.)

2.5.3 Best-Performing States

A year-by-year projection in Graph 5 enables a detailed look at the activity of the four most active states of the EEG. Several categories of activity can be observed: a U-shape tendency, represented by the Czech Republic and Estonia; a decreasing trend, present in the cases of Slovenia and Slovakia; and states with activity over 50% during the last three years, represented by the Czech Republic and Estonia. The breakdown of Slovenia's performance explains its placement in the first place. The activity of Slovenia oscillates between 66% and 54% half of the time, creating a solid core further complemented by the first four years of activity, surpassing a level of 70%. Altogether, the Slovenia's line follows a downward facing trend with the most active years in the beginning and the least at the end. On the other hand, the Czech Republic's data follows a U-shape curve with the least active years in the middle and about a 10% smaller gap between the highest and lowest scores compared to Slovenia.

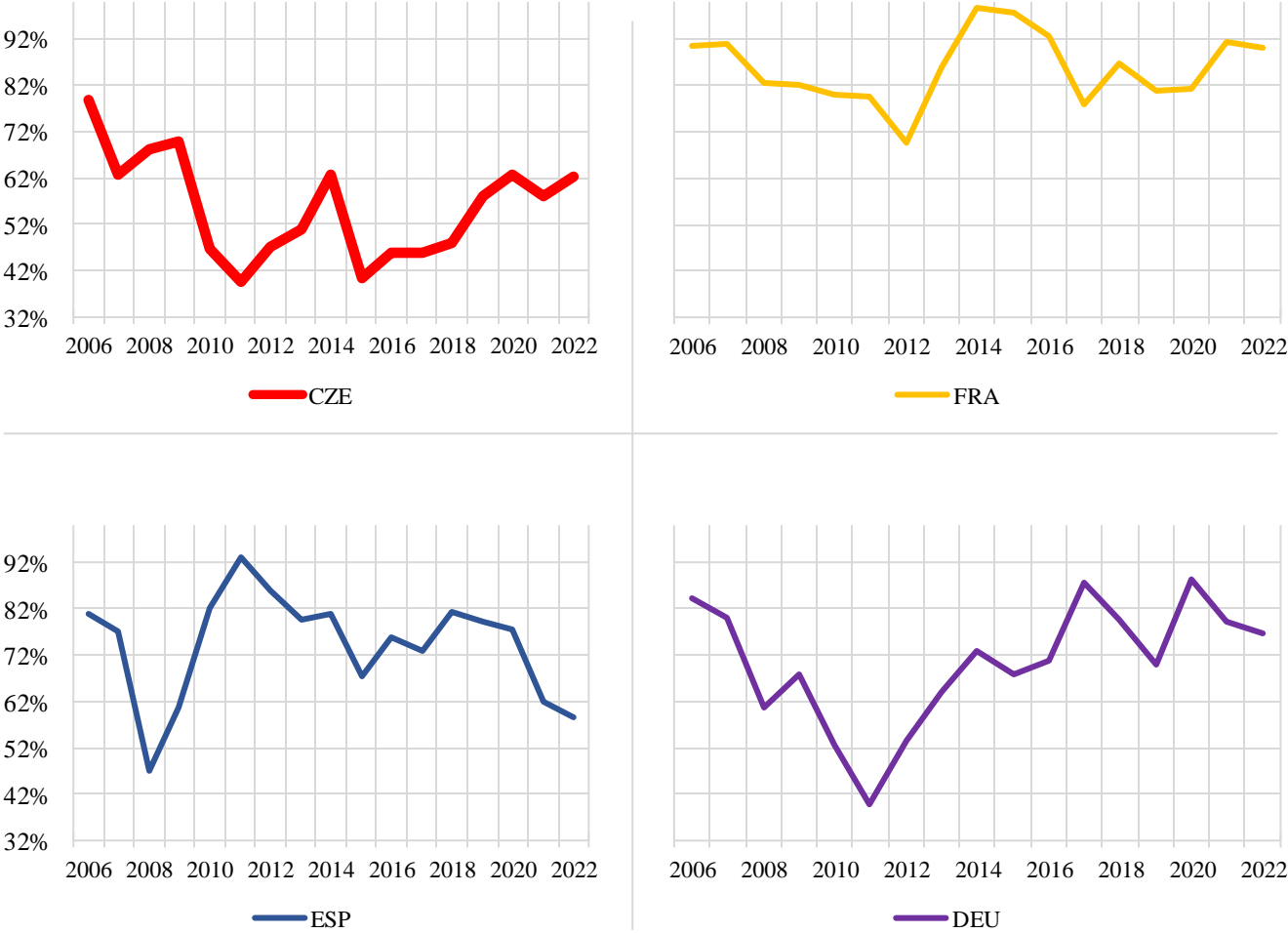
Graph 5 – Best-Performing States, EEG



Source: Author (Ibid.)

Graph 6 offers a comparison with the WEOG members, belonging to the most active states of the sample. The data of France clearly shows a superior activity reaching almost 100% in 2014 and 2015, with significant downswings in 2008, 2012 and 2017. However, the lowest score of 69.63% in 2012 means a decline under the level of 70% only by a small margin. The activity of Spain and Germany follows a similar pattern surpassing the level of 65% in the majority of the observed years but accompanied by considerable decreases. Specifically, during 2008–2009 considering the activity of Spain and in 2008 and between 2010–2012 in the case of Germany. The Czech activity is comparable with Spain and Germany during the first four years of the Council's existence. Also, an almost identical decrease in Czech and German scores in 2010–2012 can be observed. The following years indicate low Czech activity not comparable with the WEOG front runners, especially since 2015. Still, the Czech Republic's activity after 2015 is increasing and even surpassing Spain in 2022.

Graph 6 – Best-Performing States, WEOG



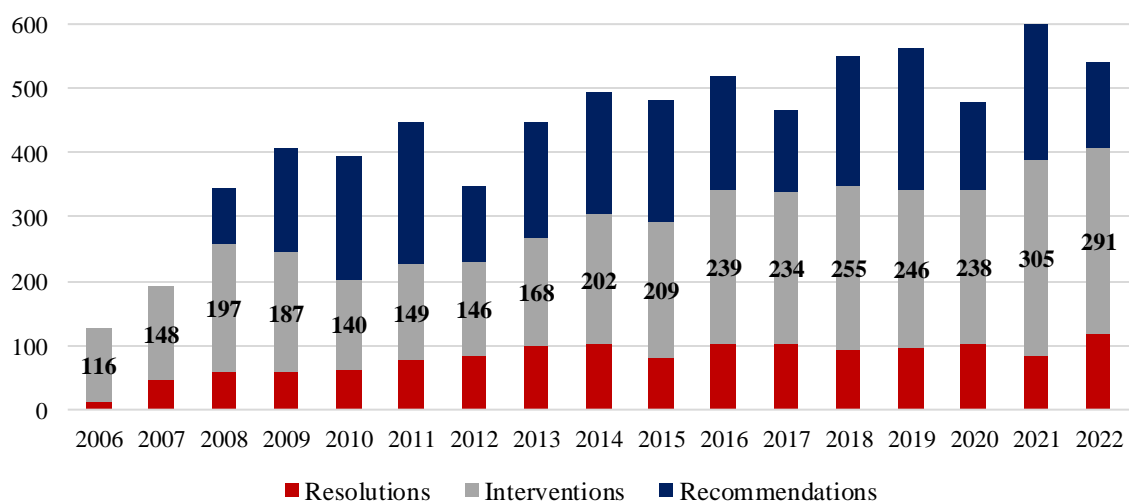
Source: Author (Ibid.)

2.5.4 Overall Activity According to Indicators

This section opens the second part of the analysis, where the activity is examined in a similar manner to the previous section starting with a general overview, followed by the comparison with the performance of regional groups, the best-performing states, and complemented by the composition of the activity.

The share of indicators on the average activity of the sample in Graph 7 presents subsequent findings. The indicator of interventions is the primary source of activity in most cases, followed by the UPR recommendations. The growing trend of the UNHRC activity is evident in the case of interventions with the highest score in 2021. The resolutions' indicator also mirrors the rising tendency in the activity, nevertheless, its score oscillates around 100 points since 2013.

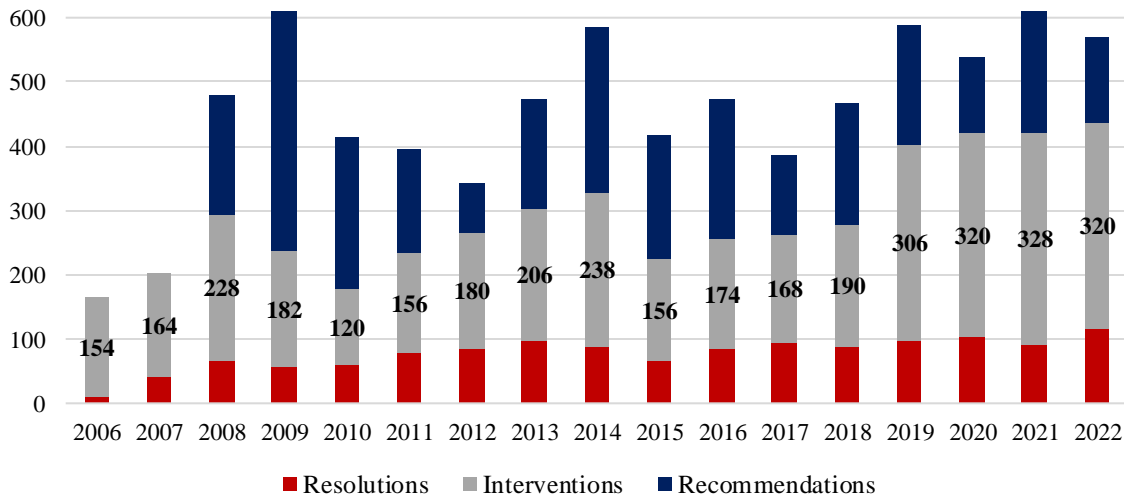
Graph 7 – Sample's Activity



Source: Author (Ibid.)

Comparison with the Czech activity in Graph 8 offers a similar view of a stable distribution of resolutions and an increasing number of interventions. More importantly, the graph explains the causes behind the abnormal activity in 2008–2009 and 2014. In the first period, the start of the UPR mechanism helped the rise in activity, which accounts for 61% of the activity in 2009, further supported by a rise in the number of interventions in 2008. The second abnormality in 2014 is accompanied by an increase in recommendations and interventions at the same time, being the second-best score among recommendations and the highest among interventions until 2019. The last four years with scores steadily above 500 points are simultaneously periods with the best performance among interventions accounting for more than 50% of the activity and with the best score among resolutions in four consecutive years, all being above 90 points.

Graph 8 – Czech Activity

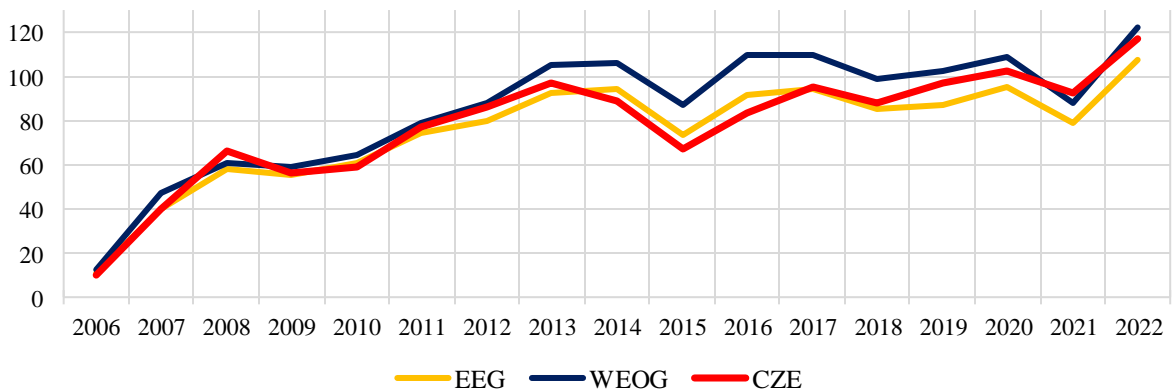


Source: Author (Ibid.)

2.5.5 Activity of Groups According to Indicators

The following three graphs display the comparison of EEG, WEOG and the Czech Republic's activity as the score in each indicator. The first Graph 9 shows, besides the tendencies already described above, that the difference between both groups is minor until the year 2012. The Czech activity fluctuates between the averages of both groups until 2013, becomes lower than EEG and WEOG averages between 2014–2016, and subsequently starts to increase and being comparable to the WEOG in the last two years.

Graph 9 – Indicator of Resolutions

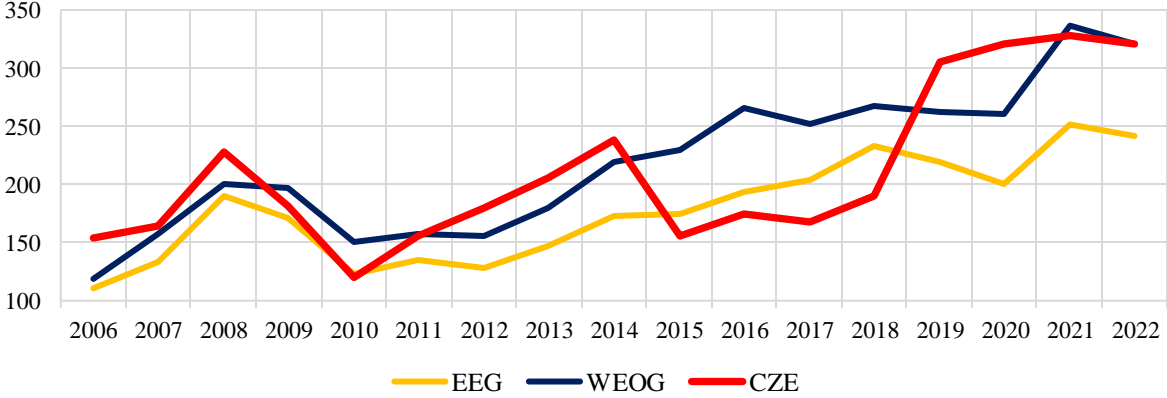


Source: Author (Ibid.)

The second Graph 10 further confirms the trend of the growing gap between both groups in the case of interventions and shows identically rising tendencies of both groups at the same time. The Czech activity marks its lowest score in 2010, equal to the EEG score, and it ranks under the average of both groups from 2015 until 2018. In contrast, three distinct periods of the

score above or around the WEOG average can be observed during 2006–2008, 2011–2014, and 2019–2022.

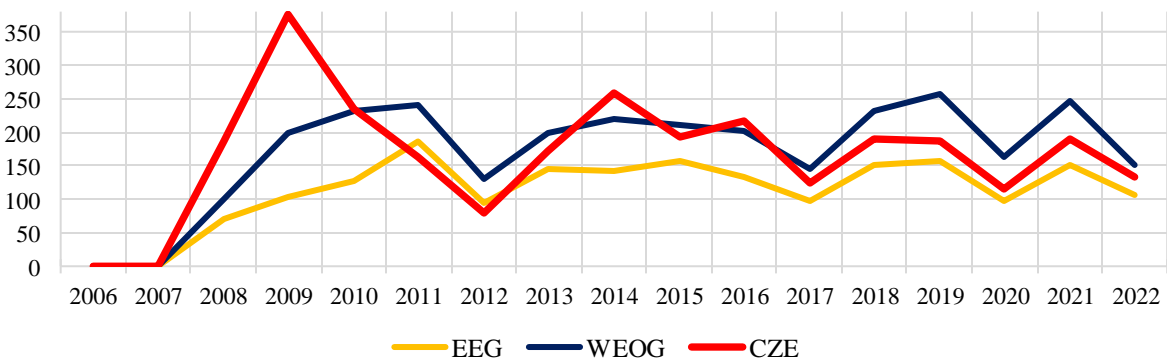
Graph 10 – Indicator of Interventions



Source: Author (Ibid.)

The third Graph 11 of recommendations presents the groups in the same order as the previous two graphs, with WEOG in the first place. Furthermore, a significant rise with its peak in 2011 is present, setting the WEOG performance just under 250 points, being reached only in 2018 and later if adjusted for the years with only two UPR sessions. The interpretation of performance in UPR's indicator is complex, yet the significant rise in the Czech activity compared to both groups in 2008 and 2009 is indisputable. (For a comparison with the best-performing states, see section 2.5.6) The rise is followed by a fall, with the lowest score in 2012 being under the average of both groups. The subsequent rise in performance above the WEOG average in 2014 and 2016 is followed by a decrease in activity oscillating between the averages of both groups.

Graph 11 – Indicator of Recommendations

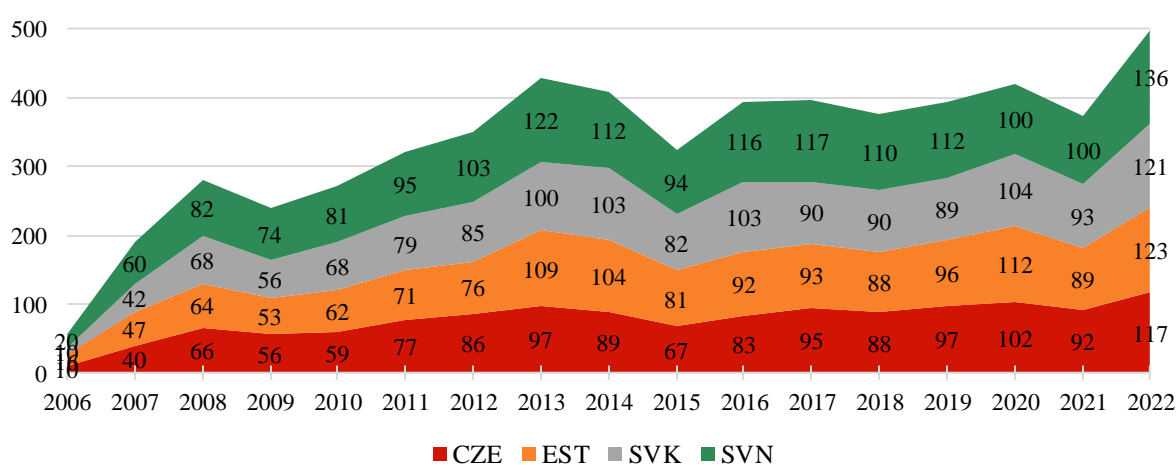


Source: Author (Ibid.)

2.5.6 Best-Performing States According to Indicators

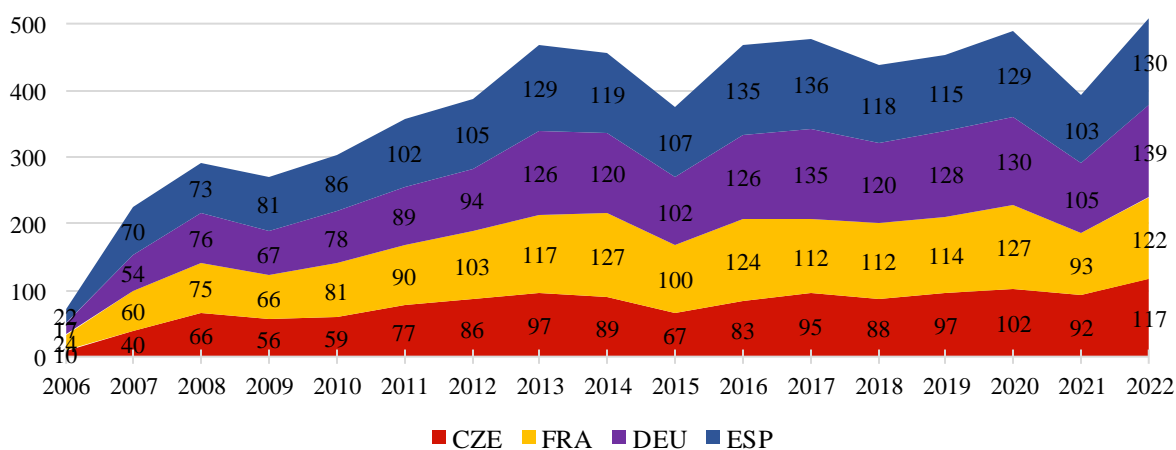
Graph 12 offers a look at the performance of the top four EEG states. The activity of the monitored states is at similar levels, except for Slovenia, which is among the most active states in the resolutions' indicator for almost the entire period. In the case of the Czech Republic, the overall activity corresponds to the performance of Slovakia and Estonia, which is not the case for the Czech activity between 2014 and 2016. A comparison with the three most active WEOG states in Graph 13 shows similar trends in their support for resolutions. However, the Czech Republic's activity is below the level of all three states throughout the period under review.

Graph 12 – Indicator of Resolutions, EEG



Source: Author (Ibid.)

Graph 13 – Indicator of Resolutions, WEOG

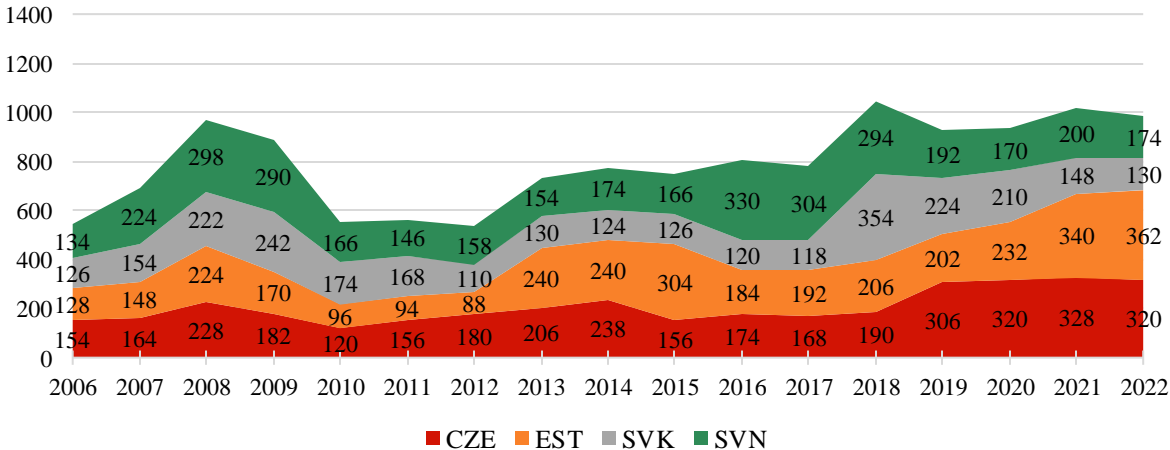


Source: Author (Ibid.)

In Graph 14, focusing on interventions of the EEG states, a considerable variation in activity across states can be observed. Estonia's first peak of activity occurs in 2008 and later between 2013–2015. Towards the end of the period, Estonia's activity rises, being the most active state in the last two years. Slovakia's first peak can be observed in 2009, followed by a

decrease and stagnation interrupted by one of the group's best performances in 2018, followed by a decreasing trend. Slovenia's performance shows two peaks of activity between 2008–2009 and later in 2016–2018, followed by larger decreases below the level of 200 points in both cases. The Czech activity oscillates similarly to other states, with peaks in 2008 and 2014 followed by a considerable increase after 2018.

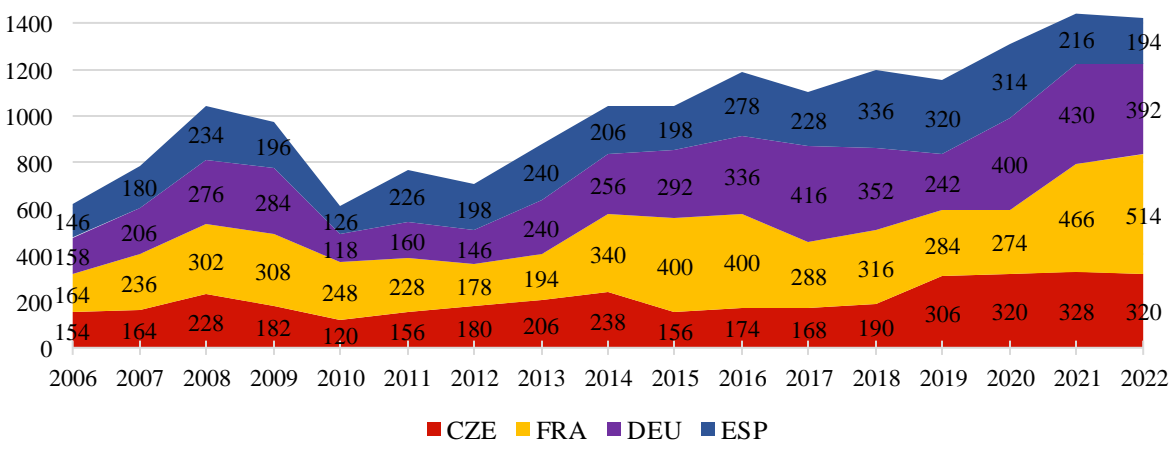
Graph 14 – Indicator of Interventions, EEG



Source: Author (Ibid.)

The WEOG activity in Graph 15 shows alternating periods of similar levels of activity as well as periods of more significant variation between the performance of the states. The peaks of French activity standing out above the rest of the states can be observed between 2008–2009, 2014–2016 and from 2021 onwards. Germany's performance rises mainly in the second half of the observed period. Czech activity is closer to the performance of Spain except for the period 2015–2018.

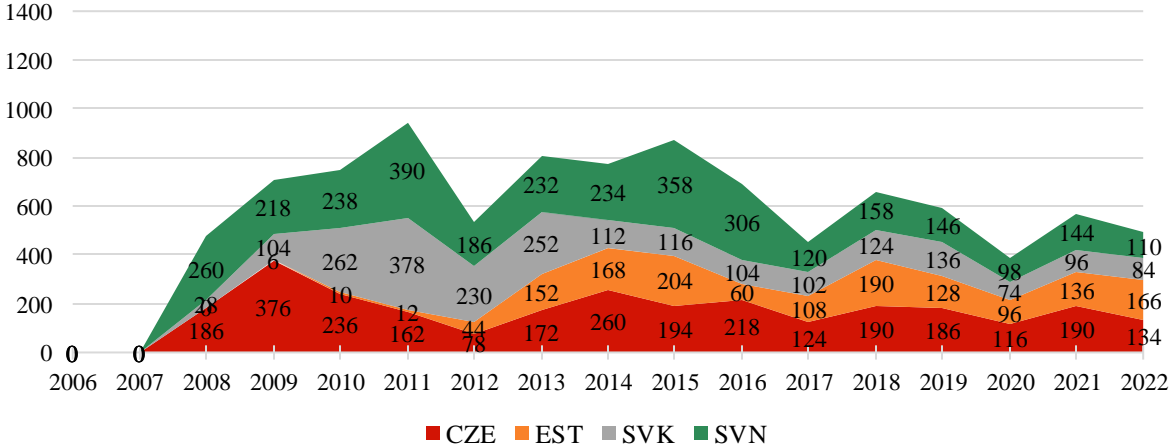
Graph 15 – Indicator of Interventions, WEOG



Source: Author (Ibid.)

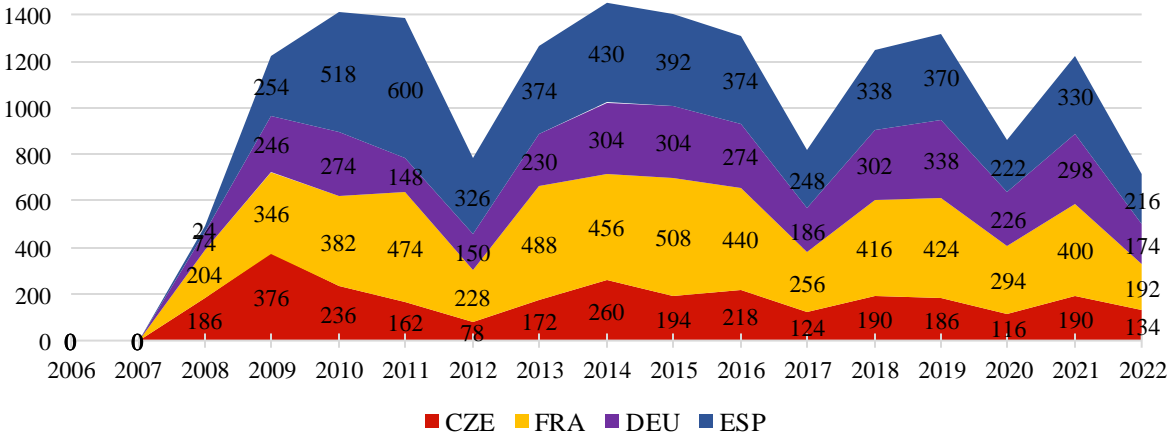
Graph 16 reflects an increase in the activity of the EEG states in the first years after the UPR began to operate and shows a gradual stabilization at a similar level, noticeable especially in the last third of the measurement. The exception is Estonia, where the initial increase cannot be observed, and the activity is comparable to other states only since 2013. In the case of Slovenia, two peaks of activity can be observed in 2011 and 2015. Slovakia marks a similar increase in 2011, followed by a decrease to the lowest activity of the sample in the last three years. Unlike the rest of the states, Czech activity peaks in 2009, followed by a decline with the bottom in 2012, and after 2013 is comparable to the performance of the rest of the states.

Graph 16 – Indicator of Recommendations, EEG



Source: Author (Ibid.)

Graph 17 – Indicator of Recommendations, WEOG



Source: Author (Ibid.)

Graph 17 shows the largest difference between the two groups, where the best-performing WEOG states significantly exceed the EEG group in their activity, as noticeable in comparison with the performance of the Czech Republic. Moreover, only the high activity of the Czech Republic during 2008–2009 is comparable to the WEOG states and later remains

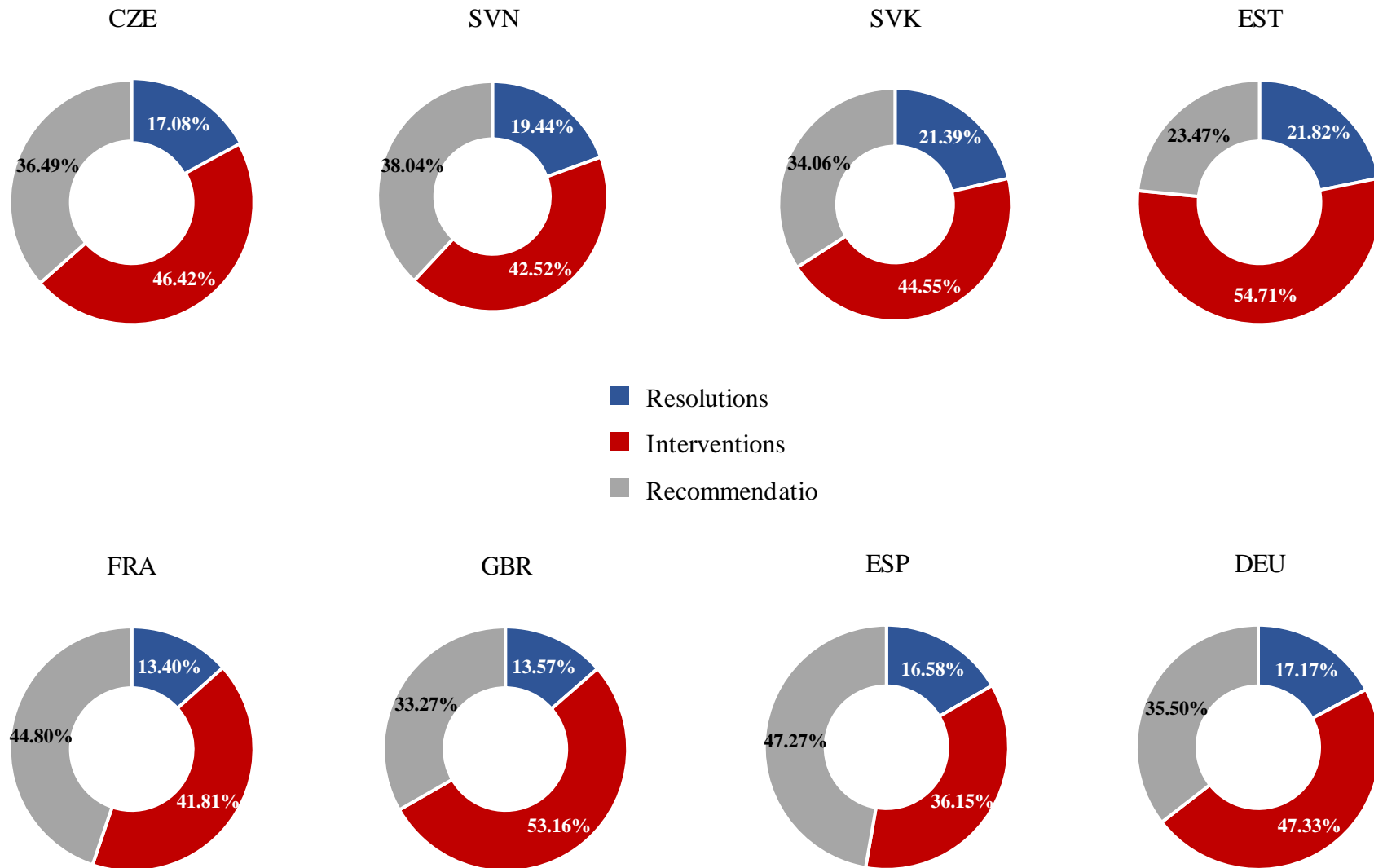
below the level of the WEOG states. Generally, a trend of convergence of WEOG activity can be observed in the last third of the period. Until 2013, Spain is the most active state with its peak in 2011, followed by an increase in activity of France after 2013.

2.5.7 Best-Performing States' Composition of Activity

The following section focuses on comparing the Czech activity with the three best-performing states of the EEG group and the four most active states of the WEOG group. Graph 18 shows an almost identical activity composition among the Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Slovakia. A minor part of their performance consists of resolutions ranging between 17%–21% of the total activity. On the contrary, a major part of the performances falls into the interventions' indicator, accounting for almost one-half and ranging between 43%–46%. The last indicator of recommendations ranges between 34%–38%. Estonia is comparable to the rest of the group only in the indicator of resolution due to its low activity in the UPR.

Among the WEOG states, a similar distribution can be observed in the case of resolutions ranging between 13%–17%. In the remaining indicators, the results differ, however, they can be divided into two groups. First, France and Spain with a share above 40% in the recommendations' indicator and second, Germany and the United Kingdom with a performance below 40%. In other words, the first two states have the major performance component in the recommendations and Germany with the United Kingdom in the interventions' indicator. At the same time, Germany is closest to the distribution of the Czech Republic's activity.

Graph 18 – Composition of Activity



Source: Author (Ibid.)

2.5.8 Czech Performance in Detail

The last section of the analytical part takes a closer look at the activity of the Czech Republic, which is examined at the level of individual sessions. The session-by-session aggregation is chosen to provide the most accurate and detailed display of the Czech performance. At the same time, the data are displayed as a percentage of activity in comparison with the rest of the sample, allowing us to place the activity in the context of the evolution of the Council's work, especially in the case of the irregular sessions of the UPR mechanism.

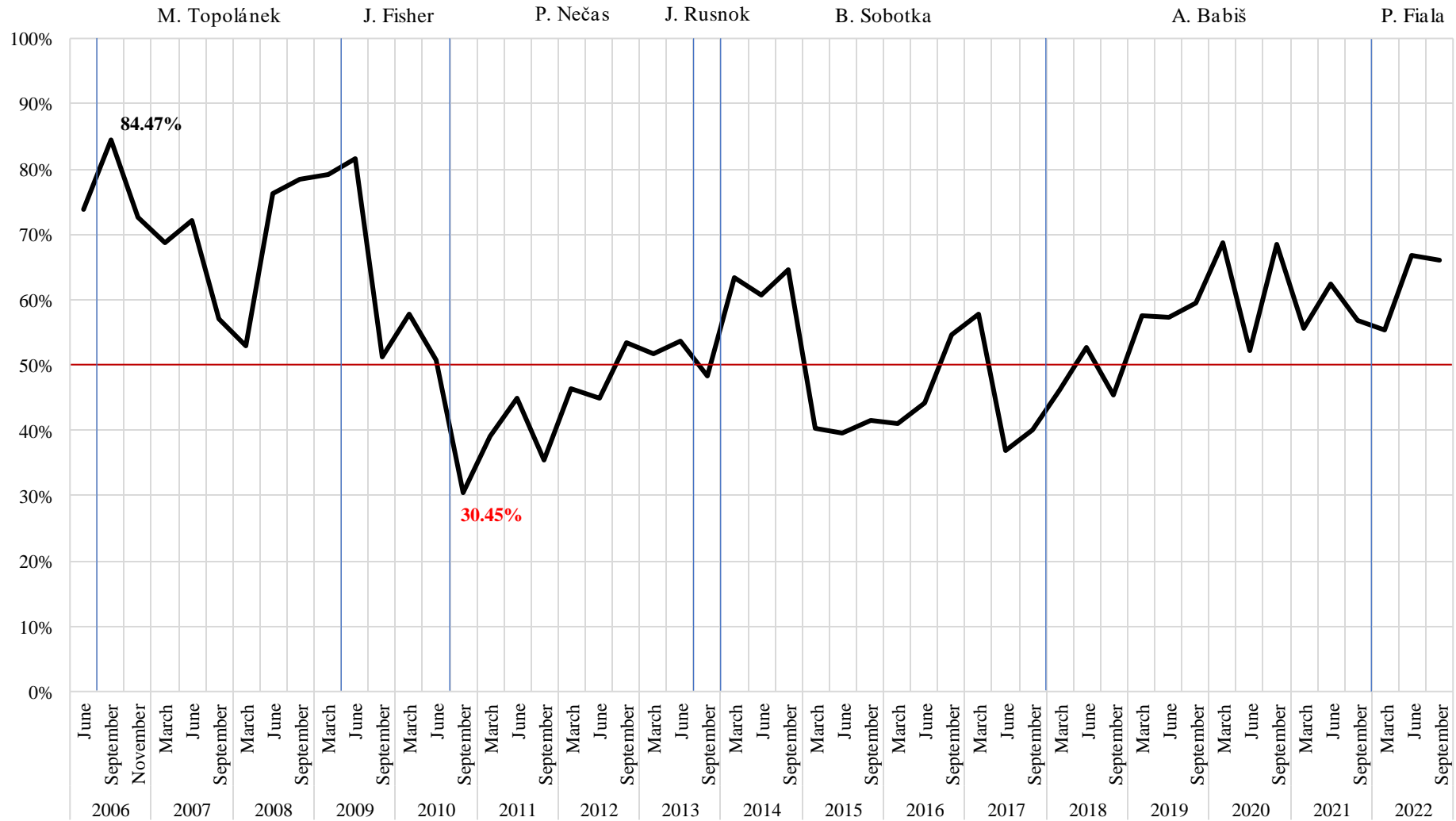
The overall view shows a high activity in the first three and a half years, not falling below 50%. The third session of 2009 saw a decrease in activity, continuing in subsequent years with activity below or just below 50%. The mentioned trend continued until the end of 2013. In the following year, an increase in activity can be observed, which did not fall below 60% in all three sessions. Subsequently, the Czech performance remained below 50% until 2019, with exceptions in the September session of 2016, the March session of 2017, and the June session of 2018. The last twelve sessions of the period under review show activity being steadily above 50%. Overall, the Czech performance shows high activity at the beginning and the end of the period, except for 2014.

Regarding the high activity in the early years, the impact of the nature of UNHRC's work, as mentioned in the previous sections of the analysis, must be considered. Similarly, the presidency of the Council of the European Union proves to have an influence on the activity, mainly due to delivering joint statements on behalf of the member states by the state holding the presidency. This phenomenon can be observed in the first half of 2009. The preceding increase in 2008 is probably caused by the preparations for the presidency or due to the increased activity in the EU joint initiatives linked to the increase in the overall activity of the Council. The increase in the Council's activity also partly explains the decrease in the Czech activity after the end of the presidency. Furthermore, the increase in activity during 2014 corresponds to the period of the Czech Republic's vice-presidency of the Council.

The last four years under review, showing activity above 50%, cannot be explained by the abovementioned influences. Even though the last two sessions of 2022 took place during the Czech presidency of the Council of the European Union, it did not considerably affect the activity as during 2008–2009. Similarly, the increase cannot be explained by changes in the activity when looking at the individual indicators or by the change in the governments' approach. The preceding analysis can only identify the segment of the increased activity, which is the intervention's indicator. Therefore, the increase in activity since the first session in 2019

has to be explained by other influences, such as changes in Council's work caused by, e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic, and requires further qualitative examination.

Graph 19 – Activity of the Czech Republic



Source: Author (Ibid.)

Conclusion

Research in the field of human rights has grown in size over the last several decades. However, the examination of the central body of the international system, the United Nations Human Rights Council, lacks a common approach to studying the system's main actors. The current state is characterised by the limited number of studies focused on the activity of states within this global forum, using mainly qualitative methods. The main reason for this study was to contribute not only to the overall methodological framework but also to the hitherto not-very extensive debate on the Czech Republic's participation in the UNHRC. The volume of academic work on Czech participation in the Council is surprisingly low, especially given the ascribed importance of the human rights agenda in Czech foreign policy.

Therefore, this work built on the framework and findings of the author's previous study and, in its two parts, presented modified qualitative and quantitative approaches examining the Czech activity. The qualitative part analysed the content of key governmental documents and strategic foreign policy concepts with a focus on changes in the approach of individual governments to the human rights agenda. The quantitative part evaluated the Czech performance compared with the selected states' activity. Both parts offered a better understanding of the influences on the activity of the Czech Republic within the UNHRC and presented detailed data on its activity and comparison with states selected on the assumption of their high activity. The analysis considered the whole existence of the Council and the Czech governments in power during the same timeframe of the last 17 years. The extensive dataset of states' activity included 24 states from two UN regional groups, WEOG and EEG, making it the largest data sample on states' activity within the UNHRC in the number of states and the period covered.

More specifically, the first part of the study presented the historical developments in the Czech lands influencing the importance of human rights as one of the foreign policy objectives. The historical background highlighted the importance of humanism, which presence in the Czech lands goes back deep into history and its very beginnings are associated with the reign of King Charles IV. The development of Czech humanism was interrupted several times, firstly on 8 November 1620 and later by the Second World War and the subsequent rise of communism in post-war Czechoslovakia. The Czech humanism of the early modern period was identified as the primary philosophical approach followed by Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic in modern history, as the first Czechoslovak President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk defined humanity as the national ideal and the main task and purpose of the Czech nation. The return to the same

ideal, under a different title of human rights, occurred with the fall of communism in 1989 and the accession of Václav Havel to the president's office.

The historical context showed, in particular, the historical tradition of the relationship to human dignity and the defence of the fundamental values of humanity in the Czech lands. And furthermore, the two main influences shaping the Czech foreign policy in the field of human rights were identified. Firstly, the long-term intellectual tradition of humanism and, secondly, the developments of the 20th century. Namely, the role of President Masaryk in the foundation of the First Czechoslovak Republic and the historical experience with the totalitarian regimes reflected in the Czech foreign policy after 1989.

The first part further examined the foreign policy development in relation to the promotion and protection of human rights from the perspective of the relevant foreign policy concepts and the policy statements of the seven examined governments. In particular, the focus was on changes in governments' approach to the human rights dimension of foreign policy between 2006 and 2022.

A general review of the key conceptual documents underlined the long-term absence of a detailed concept setting out the goals and means towards the promotion and protection of human rights, specifically between 2002–2015. At the same time, the process of concepts' reformulation between 2014–2015 highlighted the existence of two approaches to human rights among Czech experts. The post-2015 concepts adopted the broader approach promoting a focus on all generations of human rights, no thematic and territorial limitations, and dialogue as the primary tool of the policy. However, the extension of the scope of the human rights dimension after 2015 was only declaratory, as the thematic and territorial priorities remained unchanged.

A more detailed analysis of the individual approach of each government provided the following findings. In the case of the first monitored government of Mirek Topolánek, a narrow focus on the protection and promotion of the first generation of human rights was identified, emphasising the promotion of democracy. Apart from the above-mentioned specific focus on democracy, which differed from other governments in its emphasis, no other specific changes in the approach to human rights were found. The importance of democracy promotion was also reflected in the government's objectives in the formulation of the EU foreign policy. The Topolánek's government did not update the general foreign policy concept, and at the same time, no detailed concept on human rights was formulated. The last detailed concept was formulated in 2000. The only documents dealing with human rights were two brief internal documents and the sectoral priorities of the Czech Presidency in the EU, confirming the importance of the human rights dimension. Overall, the outdated general foreign policy

conception, the absence of a detailed concept on human rights and only partially defined objectives and tools made the policy less transparent and predictable and may point to a mere declaratory interest of the government in human rights issues.

The second government under review, the government of Jan Fischer, did not make any fundamental changes in the approach to the human rights dimension of foreign policy. It did not reformulate the conceptual documents and, in its policy statement, made only a brief and general declaration regarding protecting human rights and strengthening democracy in the world. The nature of the government did not allow for a change in the approach, and, based on the documents reviewed, only a continuation of the previous narrowly focused approach can be described.

Only the government of Petr Nečas made changes to the conceptual documents dealing with the human rights dimension. In terms of thematic priorities, the government continued in the approach of Topolánek's government as it adopted the narrow approach focusing exclusively on political and civil rights. However, compared to Topolánek, Nečas' government was more specific in its statements. In a similar vein, the government presented a reformulation of the conceptual documents. In particular, the general foreign policy concept from 2003 was updated and confirmed the narrow approach to human rights issues. The updated Security Strategy reflected the importance of protecting human rights, also referring exclusively to first-generation human rights. Lastly, the Transition Promotion Concept was modified, however, a detailed concept on human rights was still not formulated. Overall, the Nečas's government continued in the approach to the human rights dimension set by the Topolánek's government, which it refined and reflected in the conceptual documents. Moreover, its statements indicated a more proactive approach to human rights policy.

Similarly to the case of Jan Fischer's government, the nature of Jiří Rusnok's government did not allow for any changes in conceptual documents. However, the policy statement contained a more straightforward statement on human rights issues than the previous caretaker government. At the same time, and more importantly, a shift in approach towards a greater emphasis on economic diplomacy at the expense of human rights diplomacy can be observed.

The government of Bohuslav Sobotka confirmed the importance of the human rights dimension for Czech foreign policy after the preceding attempt to change this long-term approach. Compared to previous governments, it brought the most significant changes in the approach. In particular, the conceptual documents and the concept of human rights itself were changed. Since 2015, when the reformulated foreign policy concept was published, a shift from

a narrow to a broad focus on human rights can be observed. At the same time, the expansion to all three generations of human rights meant a reassessing of the emphasis on political and civil rights and the promotion of democracy. Moreover, the document introduced a new concept of human dignity, which is superior to human rights, and through its fulfilment, human rights are to be secured. At the same time, and after fifteen years, a detailed concept on human rights was published. However, the described changes in the approach were not fully implemented, and the approach remained unchanged in terms of thematic and territorial priorities.

The subsequent two governments of Andrej Babiš did not bring any changes in the approach to the human rights dimension of Czech foreign policy. The governments did not reformulate the conceptual documents, and thus the expanded approach set by the Sobotka's government was confirmed. In the case of the first government, the policy statement included only a declaratory statement confirming the continuation of a broad approach of human rights complemented by non-specific foreign policy objectives in this area. The policy statement of the second Babiš's government was even more concise on the issue under examination, where the previous declarations were replaced by an even shorter and more general statement. At the same time, concerning the activities in the area, the government highlighted the importance of using the Czech Republic's membership in the UNHRC between 2019–2021. Overall, the human rights dimension was less important to the government than in the case of the previous government of Bohuslav Sobotka.

On the other hand, the last government under review presented a more detailed policy statement regarding the area of human rights. Petr Fiala's government showed a greater emphasis and need for activity in the area under examination. At the same time, the government underlined the distinctive characteristic of Czech foreign policy with a reference to the so-called 'Havel-style' foreign policy. The government also mentioned a specific target in the form of a bill sanctioning gross human rights violations, which was adopted within the set deadline. Although there were no changes in relevant conceptual documents by the end of 2022, the policy statement only referred to first-generation human rights, which could indicate a return to a narrow approach. The announced reformulation of the general concept of Czech foreign policy could also suggest a change in the approach. However, whether the ministry considered revising the detailed concept on human rights was unknown.

At the end of the first part, a summarisation of the developments within Czech foreign policy in the field of human rights during 2006–2022 was conducted using the extended Mower criteria for greater clarity and comprehensiveness of the analysis. In particular, nine criteria

were monitored: reasons, priorities, definitions, objectives, scope, actors, instruments, attitudes, and typology.

When comparing governments' approaches across priorities, an oscillation between stronger and weaker emphasis on the human rights dimension was observed. Examples of governments with a weaker emphasis on human rights policy are the Fischer's or Babiš's governments. Moreover, Rusnok's government did not prioritize the human rights approach while attempting to strengthen economic diplomacy at the expense of human rights dimension. In terms of definitions, two approaches are present in the debate on the shape of the human rights dimension of Czech foreign policy. Specifically, until 2015, the narrow focus on human rights dominated foreign policy, subsequently replaced by the broad approach. However, the abovementioned change did not translate into the objectives, meaning only modification of the definition and the thematic priorities remained unchanged. Similarly, the thematic and territorial scope of foreign policy on human rights did not change after 2015. The policy instruments remained the same throughout the studied period, while the governments differed in the emphasis on utilising the specific instruments. Regarding the attitudes and typology, the Czech Republic can be classified as an internationalist and human rights initiator. Although, the approaches present in the policy statements of Fischer's, Rusnok's, and Babiš's governments show less interest in the matter than the remaining governments under review.

The second part of the study presented an analysis of the activity of the Czech Republic throughout the existence of the UNHRC, complemented by the comparison of the activity with the 23 selected WEOG and EEG states. The introduction of the analysis described the state of the current research on states' activity in the Council and its shortcomings. Specifically, the study underlined the limited focus on the middle-size and small states and the challenge of the almost exclusive use of qualitative methods. Furthermore, the lack of a common methodological framework for quantitative analysis of states' activity negatively impacting further research was identified.

Considering the formulation of a common quantitative approach, the study described two analyses offering valuable frameworks. These approaches of F. Merke and G. Pauselli and L. Hanzlíčková et al. were revised and complemented for subsequent use in this study. Specifically, the index of activity was created, consisting of three indicators measuring the number of sponsored resolutions, the number of interventions delivered at the UNHRC plenum, and the number of recommendations made during the UPR process. The indicators were selected to cover the Council's most significant competencies and functions and weighted according to the demandingness of the measured activity. The analysis used the constructed

index and the measured absolute figures of the activity according to suitability for a particular section of the analysis. The dataset of the states' activity was created based on the official Council's reports covering each session and the UPR Info database. The selection of states for comparison with the activity of the Czech Republic was made on the basis of the WEOG and EEG groups membership and fulfilment of other criteria ensuring to identify states with the highest probability of being the most active states within the UNHRC, thus creating the most competitive setting.

The activity analysis itself was carried out at eight levels. The first offered a view of the overall activity of the sample over the entire period of 2006–2022. The data showed a gradual increase in the activity related to the growth of the Council's agenda over time. Increasing trends were observed for the Czech Republic and both regional groups studied. The highest activity was measured in the case of the WEOG group. Regarding the activity of the Czech Republic, there were two periods of abnormal activity between 2008–2009 and in 2014, both followed by significant decreases. The increases were explained by the influence of the Czech presidency in the Council of the European Union in 2009 and the Czech vice-presidency of the UNHRC in 2014. Overall, the Czech activity was mostly above the EEG group's average and below the WEOG's average.

The second level considered the average activity of all selected states in percentage. The most active state of the sample was France reaching 85.82%. The state with the best performance among the EEG was Slovenia, which, together with the Czech Republic, were the only EEG states above the average of the whole sample. The Czech activity accounted for 53.98%, the gap between the two best-performing EEG states was 4.7%, and the Czech Republic ranked 11th out of the 24 states of the sample. Furthermore, five WEOG states ranked below the sample's average, and, as in the author's previous study, lower performance was observed mainly among the Nordic states. Although an effort was made to create as competitive a sample as possible, the difference between the first and last state equalled 60.31%. The comparison exclusively with the WEOG states highlighted the contrast between the Czech Republic and the best-performing state, which accounted for 31.84%. At the same time, the Czech performance ranked just below the group's average, corresponding to the activity of the United States.

The third level presented the comparison of the Czech activity with the best-performing states of the sample. In the case of the EEG group, the Czech Republic was compared with the performance of Slovenia, Slovakia, and Estonia. For the Czech Republic and Estonia, a similar tendency of highest activity at the beginning and end of the measurement and in the last three

years exceeding the level of 50% was observed. In contrast, the performance of Slovenia and Slovakia was characterized by an overall decreasing trend. The WEOG group was represented by France, Spain, and Germany in the comparison. A detailed look at the selected states' activity showed the superior activity of France, whose activity almost did not decline under the level of 70%. The Czech activity was comparable to Spain and Germany only in the first four years, and it was not comparable in the following years, especially since 2015. However, the increase in activity in the last years meant surpassing Spain's performance in 2022.

The fourth level opened the next section of the analysis focused on activity regarding the individual indicators. The composition of the sample's activity revealed the interventions indicator as the main component, simultaneously indicating the most significant increase over time. The second most represented was the indicator of recommendations. Moreover, the Czech activity proved to have a similar composition, with interventions and recommendations accounting for most of the activity. More specifically, Czech activity in the resolutions indicator showed stable results, and the rise in activity in interventions and recommendations was observed between 2008–2009 and in 2014. The last four years of the period under review showed a high increase in the interventions' indicator, corresponding to more than 50% of the total activity.

The fifth level compared the Czech activity with EEG and WEOG performances. The resolution indicator showed no significant differences between the observed performances until 2012. The Czech activity was under the WEOG group level since 2013 and between 2014 and 2016 below the EEG average. In contrast, the activity reached a level comparable to WEOG in the last years of the studies period. Furthermore, the interventions' indicator showed a growing gap between both groups with identically rising tendencies. The Czech performance marked its lowest activity in 2010 and ranked below the average of both groups from 2015 until 2018. On the contrary, three distinct periods of the score above or around the WEOG average were observed during 2006–2008, 2011–2014, and 2019–2022. The last indicator of recommendations underlined a significant increase between 2008–2009, followed by a fall with the lowest activity in 2012. The period of 2014–2016 showed performance above the WEOG average and later oscillated between the activity of both groups since 2017.

The sixth level brought a comparison of performance in the indicators between the best-performing states from both groups. In the resolutions' indicator, the Czech activity was comparable to the EEG states, except for 2014–2016. However, the Czech Republic's performance was under the activity level of the WEOG states throughout the whole period under review. The interventions' indicator showed a considerable variation among the EEG

states, and the peaks of the Czech activity in 2008, 2015, and after 2018 corresponded with the tendencies of the other states. Compared to the WEOG states, the Czech performance was closer to the performance of Spain except for the period of 2015–2018. The last indicator of recommendations reflected an increase in the activity of the states in the first years after the start of the first UPR cycle. The EEG states showed the highest activity in the first half of the studies period, and the Czech activity was comparable to the rest of the states. Comparisons of the groups' performances showed significant differences in activity, and the Czech activity was incomparable to the WEOG states.

The seventh level compared the activity composition of the best-performing states. The analysis showed an identical composition of activity in the case of the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Slovakia. Their major component represented interventions accounting for almost one-half of the activity, followed by recommendations accounting for one-third, and the smallest share of the activity was occupied by resolutions. The WEOG states had a comparable composition only in the case of resolutions and were divided into two groups according to the prevailing majority in the indicator of interventions or recommendations. At the same time, Germany was closest to the distribution of the Czech Republic's activity.

The eighth level presented a detailed analysis of the Czech activity examined at the level of individual sessions. Specifically, during the first three and a half years, the Czech performance was above the level of 50%, and subsequently decreased under this level and lasted until 2013, with the lowest point in 2010 accounting for 30.45%. During 2014, a significant increase above the level of 60% was observed, followed by a decline in activity, mostly staying below the level of 50% in the subsequent years. A change in the tendency was observed in 2019, and for the last twelve Council meetings, the Czech Republic's activity stayed above the level of 50%. Moreover, the detailed data confirmed the influence of the Czech presidency in the Council of the European Union in 2009. Similarly, the influence of the Czech vice-presidency of the UNHRC in 2014 was also confirmed. However, the same influences did not prove to be the reason for the increase in activity in the last four years under review, despite the second Czech presidency in the Council of the EU in 2022. Also, the increase could not be explained by any changes in the activity when looking at the individual indicators and only a segment of the increased activity, the indicator of interventions, was identified.

The analyses provided in the thesis helped answer the given research questions and verify the hypotheses. The answer to the first research question, *What are the overall tendencies of activity in the case of the Czech Republic?*, was offered by the activity analysis in its first level. The Czech Republic's activity in the UNHRC followed an increasing trend over time, in

line with both regional groups studied. Compared to the sample of selected states, the Czech Republic's activity showed a U-shape tendency, with the highest activity especially at the beginning and end of the period under review, and an abnormal increase in the indicator of interventions in the last four years of examination. A closer look revealed three periods of increased activity, namely between 2008–2009, in 2014 and since 2019.

The answer to the second research question, *Can we observe the impact of changes of the Czech governments on the activity of the Czech Republic in the UNHRC?*, was provided by both parts of the thesis. The theoretical part underlined the considerable continuity in the governments' approach to the human rights dimension of Czech foreign policy. Regarding the conceptual setting, a change in the approach after the expert debate between 2014–2015 was described. However, the change was not fully incorporated into the conceptual documents, and the approach to the dimension remained in thematic and territorial priorities identical to the approaches of the previous governments. Differences between the governments were observed, especially in prioritising the human rights dimension and in the emphasis placed on foreign policy instruments. A detailed look at the performance of the Czech Republic in the practical part of the thesis explained the observed variations by influences other than changes in governments, namely the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the Czech vice-presidency of the UNHRC. The only unexplained variation was the increase in activity in the last four years of measurement, which is most likely related to changes in the internal functioning of the Council after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This explanation was supported by a detailed look at the individual indicators, where the increase was observed only in the case of interventions, and the trend remained the same for both governments of the period in question.

The analysis of the change in the approach of governments to the human rights dimension of Czech foreign policy, in conjunction with the comparison of the activity of the Czech Republic with the selected sample of states, confirmed the first of the two stated hypotheses: *The influence of changes of governments on the activity in the UNHRC in the Czech case is not present or is insignificant.*

For the third research question, *What is the activity of the Czech Republic in comparison with the EEG states?*, the activity comparison yielded the following findings. Overall, the Czech performance in the period under review was above the group average but ranked second to Slovenia with a difference of 4.7%. At the level of individual indicators, the Czech Republic was at or above the group level except for two years regarding the resolutions' indicator. The interventions' indicator showed the Czech performance above the group average except for the

years 2015–2018. In the last indicator of recommendation was the Czech activity below the group level only in 2012. Comparisons with the best-performing states further confirmed the comparability of the Czech activity with the EEG states.

The answer to the last research question, *Is the activity of the Czech Republic comparable with those of WEOG states?*, is not as straightforward as in the case of the previous question. During the period under review, the Czech activity was mainly below the average of the selected WEOG states. However, the Czech performance was, together with Slovenia, among the only EEG states that were above the average of the whole sample. Compared to the overall average activity of the WEOG states, the Czech activity ranked just below the group average, comparable to the performance of the USA. Comparison with the best-performing states showed a significant difference between the Czech Republic's and WEOG states' activity. Specifically, the Czech Republic was comparable only at the beginning and partly at the end of the period under review. Regarding the resolutions' indicator, the Czech Republic's activity was mainly below the group average. On the other hand, in the case of the interventions' indicator, the Czech activity was comparable for most of the observed period. The last indicator of recommendations showed the Czech activity being mostly below the WEOG group average.

Therefore, the second hypothesis: *The activity of the Czech Republic is above the average of the EEG group and it is comparable with the WEOG group*; was confirmed only partially. The first part of the hypothesis was confirmed by the majority above-average activity of the Czech Republic compared to the performance of the EEG states. The second part of the hypothesis, considering the comparability with the WEOG states, was confirmed only in some periods and aspects of the Czech Republic's activity.

Some challenges accompanied the process of creating the presented research, but these did not significantly hinder its creation. It is worth mentioning the limited number of sources regarding studies of the human rights dimension of Czech foreign policy, mainly represented by the work of V. Bílková and Š. Zemanová. Another challenge was posed by the different formats of the reports and modification of the Council's work as both have developed over time and, together with the factual errors and errata in the reports, limit the accuracy of the dataset. The last marginal complication was the absence of the latest data in the UPR Info database.

To conclude, the thesis helped in a better understanding of the Czech activity in the UNHRC and the influence of governments on the human rights dimension of Czech foreign policy. Further qualitative examination of the influence of governments would be an appropriate continuation of the presented analysis.

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Abstract (EN)

The Czech Republic as a Long-Term Front Runner of the United Nations Human Rights Council, Myth or Reality?

The subject of the presented diploma thesis is still a marginal topic of the states' activity in the United Nations Human Rights Council. The thesis primarily examines the activity of the Czech Republic between 2006–2022 and secondarily focuses on the activity of 23 selected states, which are used for comparison with the activity of the Czech Republic. The theoretical part introduces the historical and contemporary background of the human rights dimension of Czech foreign policy and examines the changes in the approach of governments to the dimension in order to uncover their potential influence on the Czech Republic's activity in the UNHRC. The practical part presents an analysing of the measured activity of the Czech Republic, which is subsequently compared with the performance of selected member states from the WEOG and EEG UN regional groups. Based on the analysis and comparison of the collected data, the thesis concludes by testing two hypotheses: (1) The influence of the changes in the governments' approach on the Czech activity in the UNHRC is not present or is insignificant. (2) The activity of the Czech Republic is above the average of the EEG group, and it is comparable with the states of the WEOG group.

Keywords

United Nations Human Rights Council, human rights, states' activity, international relations, foreign policy, Czech Republic

Abstrakt (CS)

Česká republika jako dlouholetý lídr Rady OSN pro lidská práva, Mýtus nebo realita?

Objektem výzkumu předložené diplomové práce je v odborné literatuře doposud nepříliš frekventované téma míry aktivity států na půdě Rady OSN pro lidská práva. Práce primárně zkoumá aktivitu České republiky mezi lety 2006–2022 a sekundárně se zaměřuje na aktivitu 23 vybraných států, které jsou použity pro účely komparace s aktivitou ČR. V teoretické části je čtenář seznámen s historickými a současnými východisky lidskoprávní dimenze české zahraniční politiky jakožto jednoho z pilířů české zahraniční politiky. Druhá část teoretického bloku se zaměřuje na změny v přístupu vlád k lidskoprávní dimenzi zahraniční politiky za účelem hledání potenciálního vlivu na aktivitu ČR v Radě OSN pro lidská práva. V praktické části se práce soustředí na analýzu naměřené aktivity ČR, která je následně srovnávána s výkony vybraných členských států OSN z regionálních skupin WEOG a EEG. Závěr práce na základě analýzy a komparace nasbíraných dat ověřuje dvě stanovené hypotézy: (1) Vliv změn přístupů jednotlivých vlád k lidskoprávní dimenzi zahraniční politiky na aktivitu ČR není prokazatelný nebo je jejich dopad zanedbatelný. (2) Aktivita ČR v Radě OSN pro lidská práva je nadprůměrná ve srovnání s výkony vybraných států skupiny EEG a srovnatelná s aktivitou států WEOG.

Klíčová slova

Rada OSN pro lidská práva, lidská práva, aktivita států, mezinárodní vztahy, zahraniční politika, Česká republika